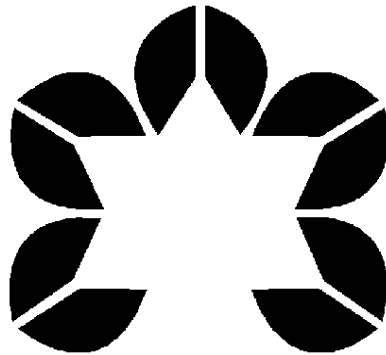


**Council of Ministers of Education, Canada
Conseil des ministres de l'Éducation (Canada)**

**Education Initiatives
in Canada, 1998:
A report from the
provinces and
territories**



**Éducation - Initiatives
au Canada, 1998 :
un rapport des
provinces et
territoires**

***DOCUMENT PREPARED FOR THE THIRD NATIONAL
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

KEY TRENDS	1
BRITISH COLUMBIA	3
ALBERTA	8
SASKATCHEWAN	14
MANITOBA	20
ONTARIO	25
QUÉBEC	33
NEW BRUNSWICK	36
NOVA SCOTIA	43
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND	50
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR	52
THE YUKON	58
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES	63

KEY TRENDS

A review of the reports in this document from Canada's provinces and territories reveals the following trends.

System-wide, the trend is toward:

Ongoing reform and review at all levels of education. Curriculum reform with a focus on standards, accountability and reporting, and restructuring and governance continue to be three important priorities. Comprehensive plans for action focus on explicit outcomes, performance measures, and targets or standards.

More information on how well the education systems are doing. In responding to demands for greater accountability, there is a renewed emphasis in reporting to the public on progress being made toward policy directions and goals of reform. In some jurisdictions, a matching emphasis on accountability in education funding lets parents and taxpayers see where their education dollars are being spent.

Continued collaboration at the regional and national levels. Collaborative efforts such as those illustrated by the Western Canadian Protocol, the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation, and the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission continue to be influential in stimulating cooperative action among provinces and territories.

Partnerships in education. Most jurisdictions have ongoing initiatives to establish and sponsor linkages among educational institutions, parents, community-based organizations, and the private sector. Many partnerships focus on integrating information technologies into the education systems, or on helping students make a smooth transition to the workplace.

Increased funding for education. After several years of constraint, many jurisdictions have increased their allocations to all levels in the education sector. This funding is often targeted to special purposes such as funding to assist learning disabled students, enrolment growth, high-technology courses, reduction of class size, reduction in the number of portable classrooms, etc.

Continued focus on information technologies. Efforts are being made to ensure that the education sector remains abreast of developments in information technologies. Priorities continue to focus on integrating information technologies in the curriculum, improving the ratio of students to computers, and promoting partnerships with the private sector.

In elementary and secondary education, the trend is toward:

Increased parental and community involvement in decision-making. School advisory councils are being implemented in most jurisdictions to provide advice to the principal on a wide range of issues such as discipline, codes of conduct, curriculum goals, school budget priorities, and use of school facilities.

School-focussed reviews. These reviews generally inform parents and others in the community about school-specific matters (e.g. class size), and set out priorities and strategies for the improvement of learning in the particular school, based on a review of school and student performance in recent years.

Continued emphasis on assessment of student achievement. Most provinces and territories have testing initiatives and participate in national and international assessment projects such as the School Achievement Indicators Program under the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada.

School discipline. A commitment to positive, disruption-free learning in the schools is set out as a high priority in several jurisdictions. Policy statements set standards for pupil conduct and address discipline matters.

Transition from school to work. Jurisdictions continue to seek more effective linkages between the education sector and the labour market, and to refine programs that will help prepare students to move into productive careers. Cooperative education, apprenticeship programs, work experience, guidance and career planning, and compulsory community involvement are only some examples of initiatives that support transitions. Special efforts are being made to ensure quality program delivery, to expand choices and options available to students, and to increase accountability of all parties.

In postsecondary education, the trend is toward:

Revitalization of the college and university sectors. There is increased collaboration and rationalization of efforts among institutions in the context of lifelong learning and transitions back and forth between learning and earning.

Improved student financial assistance. Many jurisdictions have introduced new programs to assist students to acquire a postsecondary education such as interest relief to low income or unemployed graduates and more flexible loan repayments. Some provinces and territories have established Web sites to facilitate communication regarding available assistance.

Additional sources of funding. Many institutions are implementing strategies by which they may supplement traditional sources of funding; these include marketing and recruiting strategies aimed at international students, creating business/education partnerships to support leading-edge research; building endowment funds to encourage individuals and companies to contribute.

Restructuring of institutions. Consolidation of colleges and universities continues in pursuit of greater cost efficiencies and to facilitate greater coordination of policy development and delivery of programs and services. Coordination is being enhanced by degree-approval processes by which proposals for new or significantly revised degree programs are assessed to ensure that they meet high standards, use scarce financial resources wisely, and are relevant to the development of a successful economy and society.

In skills development and training, the trend is toward:

Apprenticeship reform. New programs provide for a stronger partnership with industry, expansion to additional trades, increased opportunities for youth to explore apprenticeship programs in high-skilled occupations, and additional funding to make it easier for school districts and industry to participate. Efforts continue to make training more timely and more relevant to community employment needs.

New labour market development agreements. Provinces and territories have, or are in the process of developing, agreements with the federal government to improve services to the unemployed, increase the relevance of training and other labour market programs for employers and employees, and reduce federal-provincial overlap and duplication.

Increased work opportunities for youth. Most jurisdictions have specific initiatives geared to addressing unemployment of youth. These include programs that help youth respond to the changing nature of work as well as address the cultural and social barriers that prevent young people from working.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

As part of a general government reorganization in February 1998, the previous Ministry of Education, Skills and Training was divided into two ministries: the Ministry of Education, responsible for elementary and secondary education, and the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, responsible for postsecondary education, training, and skills development. The creation of the two ministries allows each to concentrate on addressing education issues within its respective sector.

Elementary and secondary education

Kindergarten to grade 12 education plan. In 1994, the provincial government announced a comprehensive strategy to increase the relevance and quality of education. The strategy called for revising all provincial curriculum, strengthening basic academic skills, and providing students with computer and other important skills. While parents, teachers, and other education partners have called for and welcomed these reforms, concerns have been raised about the rapid rate of change. In response to these concerns, the schedule for implementing the remaining new curriculum and education policies is being revised to provide stability for students and a more manageable level of change for the education system over the next few years.

New graduation requirements. The new graduation requirements demand that students participate in a broadly-based education. New requirements include course units in applied skills, fine arts, and career and personal planning. These requirements focus on preparing students for postsecondary studies or entry into the workforce.

Career and personal planning. This new course is required for all students from grade 8 through to graduation. Its components focus on personal development, career development including a 30-hour work experience requirement, and pursuing personal, career, and educational planning through development of a student learning plan. Reviews of the course, including one by students, recommended keeping the course and made suggestions for improvement.

Technology. In the 1995-96 school year, a five-year School Technology Plan worth more than \$100 million, was announced to increase students' access to technology and prepare them to participate in the information age. The plan sets a goal of having one computer for every three secondary students and one computer for every six elementary students.

In support of the plan, the government announced, in April 1998, that it will invest \$123 million over six years to establish a Provincial Learning Network (PLNet) that will link all 1,700 public schools, 22 postsecondary institutions, and 20 community skill centres. PLNet will increase the range of K-12 courses available in small and remote schools. It will also improve student and teacher access to learning resources and increase student and worker access to career information.

Champions in Learning, Champions in Life. In 1997, the government entered into a partnership with Orca Bay Sports and Entertainment, owners of the Vancouver Canucks and Vancouver Grizzlies professional sports teams. The "Champions" program is a comprehensive stay-in-school initiative aimed at supporting students, schools, and communities in addressing the issue of school completion. The program has six integrated components, each targeting a specific student age. The six programs are: "School is Cool," "Read to Succeed," "Power Players," "Future Stars," "Team Up," and "Second Shot."

Education funding. Operating funds for education in 1998-99 will increase by \$105 million or \$93 per student. The increase will fund enrolment pressures, as well as provide sufficient funding for special education, English-as-a-second-language, and Aboriginal education. It is anticipated that 400 new teachers and nearly 300 teaching aides and other staff such as counsellors and librarians will be hired.

Capital funding for 1998-99 will total \$338 million. The funds will be invested in the construction of new schools and the expansion and renovation of existing schools. In addition, the government has announced a five-year program to reduce by half the number of portable classrooms.

Accreditation. The ministry's Provincial Accreditation Program is intended to ensure schools continually examine, improve, and report on their growth and achievement. Every six years, the staff, students, and parents undergo a self-assessment based on reviewing evidence of school and student performance over the previous years. The results of these evaluations are used to develop a "school growth" plan stating goals and strategies for improvement. An external team visits the school and reviews the self-assessment and growth plan to determine whether the school should be accredited. The ministry provides funding to accredited schools for the implementation of the school growth plan.

In 1997, a new model was introduced that ensures that schools continually examine, improve and report on their goals and achievements. The model focuses on students and their performance, extends parent, student, and community involvement, and inserts accreditation into the school district's annual planning process.

Priorities. Reducing class size and improving reading and writing skills are top priorities in education for the government. There will be a renewed focus on reading and writing in the primary grades, with the goal to ensure all children can read and write by the end of grade 3. To help achieve this goal, the government is committed to reducing class size, particularly in the primary grades.

Postsecondary education

Youth Options BC. In 1996, the government announced a comprehensive initiative designed to help youth aged 15 to 24 make transitions from school to work or postsecondary education, and from unemployment or under-employment to employment. A major objective is to ensure that postsecondary education is affordable and accessible across the province. The initiative imposes a collective obligation across the system to improve access to postsecondary programming for all qualified students. Key initiatives for 1998 include:

- a \$26 million increase in funding to cover enrolment growth and for new programs — over the past five years, funding for postsecondary education has increased by \$230 million or 20 per cent
- creation of 2,950 additional spaces in the postsecondary sector — 500 of these spaces are specifically targeted for high technology courses; over the last two years, the postsecondary sector has created 10,000 new spaces
- extending the tuition freeze for a third consecutive year, for college, institute, and university students until March 31, 1999 under the Tuition Fee Freeze Act — the freeze applies to fees for graduate, undergraduate, career, technical, vocational, and developmental programs; it also freezes mandatory ancillary fees such as library, registration and laboratory fees; the freeze does not apply to fees charged to international students for a contract service or a continuing education program
- a 14 per cent increase in the 1998-99 provincial budget in funding available for student grants and loans (this will provide an additional \$13.4 million to ensure that student assistance keeps up with increasing student enrolment and inflation)

New institutions. British Columbia has a comprehensive system of twenty-eight postsecondary institutions, including four traditional universities, two specialized universities, five university colleges, eleven community colleges, three provincial institutes, two Aboriginal education institutes, and the Open Learning Agency (comprising the Open University, the Open College, the Open School, and the Knowledge Network). The Technical University of British Columbia and Royal Roads University are the newest institutions in the system, bringing the number of degree-granting institutions in the province to 14.

The *Technical University of British Columbia Act*, passed on July 28, 1997, established the legal infrastructure necessary for the new university to engage staff and to begin offering its educational and applied research programs. The inaugural Board of Governors at Tech BC met for the first time on December 12, 1997. In 1998-99, the government is providing a \$6.5 million operating grant to the new university to develop its programming and prepare to offer its own educational programs by September, 1999. It is anticipated that Tech BC will deliver as many as 100 full-time equivalents, generally in the field of information technology, through partnerships with other institutions in 1998-99.

As a result of the federal government's decision, in 1994, to close Royal Roads Military College, British Columbia had a unique opportunity to open a new university at the site, to expand access to postsecondary education. On July 8, 1996, Royal Roads University (RRU) was opened and launched three new degree programs: a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science, a Bachelor of Commerce in Entrepreneurial Management, and a Master of Arts in Leadership and Training. RRU continues to be developed as a specialized university in British Columbia's comprehensive system of postsecondary institutions. An integral part of the university's mandate is the provision of innovative educational opportunities in applied and professional education relevant to the workforce.

In 1998-99, the government is providing a \$5.25 million operating grant to RRU for a 550 full-time equivalent enrollment in RRU programs. The federal government's contribution for RRU for 1998-99 will be \$3.75 million, in accordance with the provisions of the Canada/British Columbia Framework Agreement on Royal Roads.

New degree approval process. The new degree approval process was established in 1995 to encourage the coherent development of a broad array of high quality degree programs, ranging from traditional degrees to those more applied or occupational in nature. The review process is meant to ensure that all new and significantly revised degree programs in the province maintain a high level of educational standards, use scarce financial resources wisely, meet labour market demand, are relevant and viable, and contribute to the development of a successful economy and society.

The Degree Program Review Committee reviews all new degree program proposals and recommends on their approval to the minister. Since the inception of the new degree approval process, the committee has recommended approval of 46 new or significantly revised degree programs and the minister has accepted all of these recommendations. By the end of December, 1997, 33 new degree programs were implemented in British Columbia since the establishment of the process.

Prior learning assessment. Prior learning assessment (PLA) is a process that enables people to gain recognition and credit for what they already know and can do. Institutions offering PLA services recognize that people learn at work, in their communities, and at home, as well as in classrooms. PLA makes it possible for people to earn credit towards a college or university credential or to receive recognition at work for skills and knowledge they already possess. This year, 26 postsecondary institutions were funded to develop and implement PLA programs and/or services.

Developmental Education Programs. Developmental Education Programs are offered through 18 colleges and institutes as well as the Open Learning Agency. They include programs in Adult Basic Education (ABE), Literacy, English Language Training (ELT), and Adult Special Education (ASE), programs designed for the large number of adult British Columbians in need of basic skills or language training to participate fully in society and the economy. ABE, Literacy, and ELT programs provide flexible learning opportunities for adult learners to acquire the foundation skills and English language skills they need to be successful in employment-related vocational, career, technical and academic programs or to move directly into the workplace.

About \$90 million is provided for literacy, ABE, and high school completion programs in British Columbia through colleges and school districts. For ELT programs, the ministry provides \$18.5 million in base funding to 17 public postsecondary institutions. ASE programs accommodate students who have a disability. About \$8 million is provided for ASE programs, and a further \$4 million, for support services for students with a disability.

Skills development and training

BC Benefits. BC Benefits is a major renewal of British Columbia's social safety net, representing new funding for low income working families and new programs to support youth and adults moving from welfare to the workforce. BC Benefits has two main training and employability programs, *Youth Works* for young people aged 19 to 24 years, and *Welfare to Work* for adults 25 to 60, that link income assistance with employability programs and other services for employable persons.

Both programs include three types of service:

- Independent Job Search (IJS) provides a range of drop-in assistance to improve a person's ability to find work, including job placement services, some transportation assistance, messaging, and resumes.
- Assisted Job Search (AJS) provides in-depth assessments and the workplace-based training job placement program.
- Employability Skills (ES) offers a range of programs designed to develop clients' job-related skills and experience.

Eligibility for these three areas is based on objective criteria, mainly time on assistance over the past 12 months. All clients are eligible for IJS; clients who have seven or more months on assistance over the past 12 can also access AJS, and clients with nine or more months on assistance in the past 12 can access ES as well as IJS and AJS. Persons with disabilities and minors may access any service type at any time, based on availability and suitability.

Youth Works is guaranteed and mandatory. The government guarantees youth clients access to employability programs, including a living allowance and benefits, providing they look for work and participate in the programs. For this reason, Youth Works clients are not considered to be on income assistance. Welfare to Work clients have access to phase two and three programs on an "as available" basis. Some income assistance recipients are not required to participate in employability programs such as persons with disabilities, parents with children under seven, etc.

Skills Development Centres contract with colleges and institutes to provide job search and job-readiness programs. Colleges also offer ABE, literacy, and other basic education and training programs under BC Benefits.

Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission (ITAC). ITAC was established in November 1997 as a replacement for the former Provincial Apprenticeship Board. In addition, the apprenticeship functions of the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology were transferred to ITAC.

ITAC is a four-cornered partnership of business, labour, education and training providers, and government. It is a senior level strategic policy board with the authority to make decisions, effect allocations, establish training programs and coordinate credentialled industry training and apprenticeship. The 1998-99 budget is \$69.069 million. The Commission has identified three main strategic priorities:

- creating a cohesive industry training and apprenticeship system
- increasing industry training and apprenticeship opportunities
- expanding the number of designated trades and occupations

Standing committees on designations, programs, credentials, and finance and administration, and a task group on under-represented groups, have been established to provide advice and recommendations to the Commission.

Internet. Further information may be obtained at <http://www.educ.gov.bc.ca>

ALBERTA

Albertans have said that “people development” should be government’s most important priority and Alberta’s new three-year plan for education, *First things first. . . our children*, is built upon this premise. This plan outlines a significant re-investment in new programs and initiatives to give students a solid foundation for life-long learning and success. These changes form the government’s response to parents, educators, administrators, and community members who have shared their thoughts and ideas directly with the minister, with task forces created to consider special issues in education, and with the province-wide Education and Alberta Growth Summits.

Priority areas for improvement. Despite the high level of achievement of Alberta students, as demonstrated by their performance on national SAIP and international TIMSS tests, the people and government of Alberta know we can do better.

First things first. . . our children identifies five priority areas for improving Alberta’s education system, based on the results of previous planning and reporting cycles:

- improving co-ordination of services for children
- increasing high school completion rates
- improving secondary student achievement in mathematics
- improving access to information technology
- improving public satisfaction

These priorities are closely tied to the goals for education and the associated strategies and initiatives outlined in the three-year plan.

The *3 Year Plan for Education: 1998-99 to 2000-2001* and related documents are posted on the Alberta Education Internet site at <http://ednet.edc.gov.ab.ca/department/>

Re-investment in education. To support the goals of *First things first...our children*, the Alberta government is adding about \$380 million to total education spending over the next three years, and is targeting the money to areas that directly affect students and the quality of their learning. This re-investment is an increase of almost 13 per cent over Budget '97, and will bring total education spending to \$3.37 billion by the year 2000/2001. Re-investment in education is targeted at increasing support for children in the early years of schooling, addressing classroom pressures, and providing increased support for education infrastructure.

The phase-in of a uniform provincial education property tax rate ensures that Alberta property taxpayers contribute equitably and fairly to the cost of educating students. The overall provincial education property tax rate was reduced in 1994, marking the first time in 10 years that the rate had declined. Government has continued to reduce this rate for five consecutive years.

Focussing on what students need to learn, achieving high standards, and preparing students for the world beyond school

Early learning initiatives. Alberta’s most recent program enhancements focus on the needs of the youngest students, because improving student achievement in secondary grades and increasing high school completion depend on establishing a firm foundation for learning in the early years of schooling. Funding will be provided to place interns into Kindergarten, grade 1, and grade 2 classrooms to assist teachers in providing intensive assistance to students acquiring early literacy skills. A new teacher aide program for elementary grades will

increase the support available for teachers and enhance opportunities for students to achieve learning expectations.

To augment programs already in place to assist immigrant children, provincial funding will now be available for special intervention, to assist Canadian born students who do not speak English sufficiently well to succeed in the English language classroom.

Curriculum Development. Alberta continues to work with other Western Canadian Protocol (WCP) provinces to implement a new program of studies for mathematics education. The introduction of new pure and applied mathematics course streams at the senior high school level is a major initiative directed at improving the mathematics skills and knowledge of graduating students. The recent completion of the French language arts and Français programs of study based on the WCP framework will help Alberta maintain high quality French immersion and francophone programs.

Work continues on re-developing the senior high school English course structure and content to reflect the English language arts common curriculum framework. Other WCP initiatives in the areas of international and aboriginal languages, distance learning and technology, and social studies are at various stages of development or implementation.

As well as the WCP curriculum initiatives, Alberta is currently reviewing its science program to assess its fit with pan-Canadian outcomes, and is taking lead responsibility in exploring the potential for a pan-Canadian framework on citizenship education. Curriculum activities within the province include the implementation of a new physical education curriculum based upon the principles of active living, a review of the entire health program and the implementation of the Italian and Spanish programs of study.

Initiatives to Support Student Transitions. In February 1997, the Government of Alberta announced *People and Prosperity*, a comprehensive human resources strategy for the province. This strategy was the result of a coordinated effort among 11 government departments, and includes a special section on strategies for youth including cooperative initiatives involving government departments, school systems, adult training and education institutions, and business and industry.

Alberta Education supports youth employment training and transitions into the workplace and further studies through the following:

- **Career and Technology Studies (CTS):** CTS is a modular, outcome-based program that provides students with opportunities to develop life skills, gain awareness of career opportunities and develop career-related competencies in a variety of technical fields. Among the 22 CTS course strands are Agriculture, Construction Technologies, Electro-Technologies, Energy and Mines, Fabrication Studies, Food Studies, Information Processing, and Mechanics.
- **Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP):** RAP provides high school students with access to learning opportunities in more than 50 apprenticeship trades. High school students can earn up to 1000 hours toward a trade apprenticeship by completing 8 (5-credit) RAP courses in the trade of their choice while completing their high school diploma requirements.
- **Articulation and Credentialing Opportunities:** Alberta Education and local school jurisdictions are working to establish accreditation agreements with colleges, technical institutes, and trade organizations, to facilitate students' transition from school to work. One example of this type of initiative is Tech-Prep, a structured program that allows students completing a set of designated courses, a portfolio of competencies,

and a minimum of 250 hours of related work experience to obtain advanced standing in participating postsecondary institutions. Advance standing in selected apprenticeship programs is also afforded to students completing appropriate CTS modules.

- **Work Experience:** Work Experience courses provide students with opportunities to learn by doing, through work placements with local businesses. Students can spend from 75 to 250 hours each year in work experience in grades 10, 11 and 12. The number of course completions in work experience increased from 11,500 in 1993-94 to over 15,000 in 1995-96.
- **Careers . . . The Next Generation Foundation (CNG):** This alliance of business organizations and government encourages students to consider career opportunities in the trades and technologies. CNG has mobilized communities to help students make a smooth transition into the workplace by promoting programs such as RAP.
- **Skills Canada Alberta:** This annual competition showcasing career-related skills is part of a national effort involving business, schools, and government that promotes the development of student interest and skills in trades, services, and technology.
- **Transitions Partnerships:** Alberta is rich in business-education partnerships. Other Alberta partnership groups that help students make a smooth transition to the workplace and entrepreneurial careers include the Alberta Chamber of Commerce, Junior Achievement of Alberta, and the Calgary Business-Education Partnerships Foundation. The Chamber, for example, has identified youth transitions as a priority area for their work.

Technology Initiatives. Alberta's approach to technology focuses on integrating the effective use of technology into learning experiences across the curriculum. This approach underlies the *Learner Outcomes in Information and Communication Technology, ECS to Grade 12* framework that was released in November 1997. This document outlines the technology knowledge and skills students are expected to learn at each level of schooling. A *Curriculum Integration Guide with Illustrative Examples* and an interim *Information and Communication Technology Program of Studies* will be completed in June 1998.

Government is committed to re-investing \$85 million in the period from 1996-97 to 2000-2001 to provide the technology infrastructure needed to support student learning. In addition, a \$5 million Network Access Grant provided in 1995-96 has resulted in 99 per cent of funded schools and jurisdiction offices in Alberta establishing Internet connections.

Four provincial software agreements, including agreements with Microsoft Corporation and Claris Canada, allow school jurisdictions to purchase educational software at significantly reduced prices.

Alberta Education, in partnership with other education stakeholders and the business sector, has developed a two-year program to provide Internet training for teachers. The TELUS Learning Connection (TLC) project team provided inservice sessions to over 240 teacher-leaders, representing all Alberta school jurisdictions, in early 1998, and also developed a Web site for teachers at <http://www.2Learn.ca>

Provincial Evaluation. Alberta remains committed to measuring student achievement by means of high quality provincial examinations. The value of the provincial testing program is greatly enhanced by effectively interpreting test results and using the information gained to improve student learning. To assist teachers and school administrators to make effective use of the grades 3, 6 and 9 Provincial Achievement Test results, Alberta

Education has introduced two-day workshops that provide participants with an opportunity to “walk through” their school and jurisdiction results reports and to identify what these data reveal about their instruction programs.

In response to the needs of a growing number of alternative approaches to scheduling, Alberta Education continues to investigate ways of offering increased flexibility to students and supporting the broad range of approaches to delivering education.

To assist teachers to improve the quality of classroom evaluation, the recently completed Classroom Assessment Materials Project (CAMP) provides high quality evaluation tools, including selected and written response tests, performance-based activities, scoring rubrics, and graded samples of student responses in core subjects for all grades not currently being evaluated by means of a provincial examination.

Emphasizing choice and local control

Providing communities, parents, and students with the widest possible range of educational options is an important goal of Alberta’s education system.

Charter schools. In 1997-98, 2,130 students were attending eleven charter schools, each teaching the Alberta Program of Studies with a unique focus or philosophical orientation. A twelfth charter has been granted and three additional applications are currently being considered by public school jurisdictions. A study of the existing charter schools in Alberta is being conducted by the Society for Excellence in Education.

Private schools. In response to input provided by Albertans, the government will be increasing the instructional grants provided to private schools to 60 per cent of that provided to the public schools. Private schools will be required to teach the Alberta Program of Studies.

Francophone education. There are currently three francophone authorities in the province. The government has requested recommendations regarding the expansion of full francophone governance to all areas of the province.

Local control. As a result of restructuring, the number of school boards was reduced from 181 in 1993 to 60 (including three francophone authorities) in 1998. The number of trustees was reduced from 1,164 to approximately 437. Over this same period, school councils have been established at every school to facilitate cooperative decision making among teachers, administrators, parents, students, and community members. Schools and jurisdictions are encouraged to explore innovative approaches to meeting local needs.

Internet presence. Additional information about education in Alberta can be found on EdNET, the Alberta Education Internet site, at <http://ednet.edc.gov.ab.ca>.

Postsecondary education

Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development is dedicated to building a strong Alberta by helping people become self-reliant, capable, and caring through lifelong learning. The department promotes prosperity for Alberta and Albertans by ensuring that adults have access to high quality, affordable adult learning opportunities that are responsive to changing demands.

The department's strategic direction focuses on the goals of accessibility, responsiveness, affordability, research excellence, and effectiveness. Recent activities relating to these goals are summarized below.

Accessibility

Access Fund. The Access Fund is responding to short- and long-term enrolment pressures such as increasing demand in apprenticeship training and increases in the high school graduate population. It has allocated funding to expand and enhance apprenticeship and to meet future enrolment pressures.

Learning enhancement. Alberta's learning enhancement approaches integrate technology in the adult learning system to expand and improve learning opportunities. Major initiatives include adapting curriculum to allow students to learn on campus, at home, in the community, or at the workplace, increasing distance learning, researching models of technological learning, and purchasing equipment necessary to use the technology.

Alberta Learning Information Service. The Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) was introduced in 1997 as a comprehensive and integrated electronic information service for learners. Its services assist adult learners to select programs in postsecondary institutions and provide electronic information on financial assistance and career planning.

Responsiveness

People and Prosperity. In 1997, the Government of Alberta released a new human resource strategy, *People and Prosperity*. The strategy sets goals and proposes actions for helping Albertans to reach their potential in a changing economy. The actions build on the strong foundation of provincial programs that are already in place to support Albertans in their development and that foster safe and productive workplaces. The strategy is an ongoing initiative of the government, involving most departments.

Transitions. Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development works with other departments to facilitate successful transitions for young people from school to work, school to postsecondary school, and work to school. Efforts focus on improving information for informed decision-making, improving employability skills, increasing participation by youths in competitive employment and further learning, and broadening recognition of the knowledge and skills acquired by youths.

Youth Connections. A Youth Connections initiative was implemented in 1997 to help prepare disadvantaged youth with knowledge, workplace skills, and employability attitudes. It also provides information about careers that require skills development, though not necessarily degrees or diplomas. The program aims to:

- increase knowledge of occupations and employer expectations
- reduce dependency on social assistance programs
- increase interest in opportunities for progressive skill development
- improve the employability skills of young people
- increase hiring of youth in the private sector

Adult development reform initiative. Generally, adults with low levels of education (typically less than a grade 12 education) and limited employability skills and/or limited language skills have engaged in long-term academic upgrading programs to improve skills levels. The emphasis of such programs was on academic skills and, to a lesser extent, occupational or employability skills. Reforms are being made that will provide adult learners with an integrated program of applied academic, employability, and occupation-specific knowledge and skills to enable them to find work or embark on a course of postsecondary education. The reform will also maximize the return on investment of public resources in adult programming.

Performance incentives. Over the next three years, a total of \$39 million will be targeted to reward performance and promote excellence in Alberta's public postsecondary learning system. The minimum reward to each institution will be a net of 1.0% of its general operations grant but could be more, depending on the level of performance. Performance will be measured by a set of key performance indicators.

Key performance indicators. Accountability is a government-wide priority in Alberta. In that context, Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development and all of the province's public colleges, technical institutes, private university colleges, and universities have agreed on a set of consistent and comparable key performance indicators to assist decision makers in system-wide planning, create formulae to reward institutions for their performance, and enable students to make informed choices about programs.

Affordability

Tuition fees. Alberta's tuition fee policy provides an upper limit for learners' share of costs, and controls the rate at which that limit can be reached. Tuition fee revenues cannot exceed 30 per cent of net operating expenditures and the 30 per cent target cannot be reached before year 2000. The 30 per cent cap is now in legislation.

Student financial assistance. Funding for the province's financial assistance program has been increased to accommodate the rising tuition costs of education. This will ensure Albertans have affordable access to education. The department is working with the federal government to harmonize programming and improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of student financial assistance programs.

Alberta Opportunities Bursary. The department has recently announced the implementation of an Alberta Opportunities Bursary. The bursary is targeted to high needs adult learners, and is jointly funded by postsecondary institutions, the private sector and the government. The bursary aims to:

- reduce debt for graduates
- enhance the participation of the private sector
- promote access for high needs learners
- reduce debt for learners while in school
- increase investment by industry and postsecondary institutions in student assistance

Northern Alberta Development Bursaries are also available to increase the number of qualified professionals in northern Alberta by providing bursaries to students committed to a life and career in northern Alberta.

Research excellence

Research excellence envelope. The government has allocated funding to assist universities to pursue research excellence and increase access to the development of new knowledge. Funding is provided to enable universities to attract high quality faculty and graduate students.

Research infrastructure. Funding has been allocated to support strategic investments in research infrastructure at Alberta's universities. The funding will modernize research facilities and upgrade equipment and databases used in research.

Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development's Internet Address: <http://www.aecd.gov.ab.ca>

SASKATCHEWAN

Elementary and secondary education

Restructuring. In 1996, the Government of Saskatchewan undertook an extensive public consultation process that revealed a broad willingness to consider potential school division restructuring as a means to maintain and improve the quality of education for Saskatchewan students. Following this, a plan for educational restructuring was announced in December 1996 that balanced government leadership with local determination. The plan included the expectation that every school division would examine the potential for restructuring to improve the quality of education.

Respectful of the strong desire for local decision-making on this important issue, the government is encouraging school divisions to ensure their divisions are structured in a manner that enables them to offer students quality education. At the start of the restructuring process a restructuring coordinating committee, made up of key stakeholders, was established to focus commitment and to maintain momentum.

Government support has included:

- availability of department staff to solve problems and support restructuring initiatives
- administrative, policy, and legislative changes to remove barriers and support restructuring initiatives
- print materials to assist boards as they work through the exploration and implementation of restructuring and partnership initiatives

This approach to restructuring has generated significant change thus far. Prior to the public consultations in 1996, there were 119 school divisions. As of October 22, 1997, the total number of school divisions had decreased to 107 (79 public, 19 separate, 9 francophone). Several other school divisions are currently exploring possibilities for future restructuring.

In addition, school divisions across the province are engaged in a range of partnerships with other school divisions and with other groups such as regional colleges and regional libraries. These partnerships enable joint use of facilities and shared education programs.

Core Curriculum. In the early 1980s, Saskatchewan undertook an extensive review of its K-12 education system. As a result of this review, a report entitled *Directions* (1984) made 16 recommendations that have formed the blueprint for the K-12 educational reform known as Core Curriculum.

Saskatchewan's Core Curriculum is intended to provide all Saskatchewan students with an education that will serve them well regardless of their choices after leaving school. It reinforces the teaching of basic skills and introduces an expanded range of new skills to the curriculum.

Core Curriculum is developmental in nature and based on a Kindergarten to grade 12 continuum. In recognition of the stages of child growth and development, the grades are grouped into the following levels:

- Kindergarten
- elementary level (grades 1 to 5)
- middle level (grades 6 to 9)
- secondary level (grades 10-12)

The two major components of Core Curriculum are the *Required Areas of Study* and the *Common Essential Learnings*. Seven required areas of study form the framework of the curriculum: English language arts,

mathematics, science, social studies, health education, physical education, and arts education. Six categories of common essential learnings are to be incorporated in an appropriate manner into all courses of study, K-12: communication, numeracy, critical and creative thinking, technological literacy, personal and social values and skills, and independent learning.

To meet community and student needs at the local level, provision is made within Core Curriculum to offer *Locally-determined Options*. Such options can be provided through the selection of provincially-developed courses or through courses developed at the local level. In recognition of the diverse needs of students, provision is made through the *Adaptive Dimension* for teachers to adapt instructional materials, methods, and environment to provide the most appropriate educational opportunities for students.

In addition to these key components, Core Curriculum includes various initiatives that guide the development of teaching materials as well as instruction in the classroom. These initiatives include resource-based learning, Aboriginal education, gender equity, multicultural education, and integration of students with special needs.

A ten-year curriculum revision process has produced revised curricula in all required areas of study from K-12. Significant developments are also underway in redefining the practical and applied arts in Saskatchewan. To support the province in understanding curriculum development in the practical and applied arts, Saskatchewan Education released, in the fall of 1997, a draft document entitled *Practical and Applied Arts: An Information Bulletin*. A major part of the overall plan is to renew certain existing practical and applied arts courses, to elevate tested locally-developed courses in the practical and applied arts to the status of provincial guidelines, and to adapt ideas from programs developed in other jurisdictions. Processes are under way to resolve issues surrounding teacher certification and training and work experience/study. The renewed practical and applied arts program of studies will balance theory and practice, complementing the required areas of study. It will address many dimensions of transition to work.

Emphasis is also being placed on maintenance or renewal of the new curriculum, in a process that has been called *evergreening*. This will keep the curriculum up-to-date and provide ongoing support for implementation activities. Results of formal curriculum evaluations are used in the evergreening process. This process of continuous renewal and growth accommodates the diverse and changing needs of students, takes advantage of new technologies, and reflects current thinking in pedagogy. A draft joint policy framework and action plan is under development.

Saskatchewan is also collaborating with other provinces and the territories under the formal Western Protocol and the Pan-Canadian Protocol to develop curriculum frameworks, resources, and supports.

The Saskatchewan Education Indicators Program. Saskatchewan Education, in collaboration with the major education partners, has developed the *Saskatchewan Indicators Program*. In addition to promoting the best possible learning environment for all students and providing information about the attainment of goals of education, the objectives of the provincial education indicators program are to:

- provide a broad range of relevant and appropriate indicators tied to the goals of education
- assist in assessing and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the K-12 education system
- support decision-making, planning, and policy development at all levels of the education system
- contribute to informed dialogue about the education system

Two important sources of information for the Indicators Program are the Saskatchewan Curriculum Evaluation Program and the Provincial Learning Assessment Program. Curriculum evaluations examine the extent of implementation of curricula through assessment of:

- teacher understanding and use of the curricula
- the level of resource, in-service, and administrative support for the curricula
- student and community understanding of, and reaction to, the curricula

A panel of stakeholders reviews the information and makes recommendations for enhancing curriculum use in the classroom.

The Provincial Learning Assessment Program measures student achievement at the provincial level by administering language arts and mathematics assessments in alternating years to random samples of grades 5, 8, and 11 students. A panel of stakeholders sets both achievement and opportunity-to-learn standards for the assessment results.

Saskatchewan’s Action Plan For Children. This strategy involves seven government departments and communities in a partnership to promote and sustain an emphasis on issues affecting children, youth, and families. Initiated in 1993, the Action Plan involves coordinated planning, decision-making, and activities at the provincial and regional levels.

This year, provincial government support for new and enhanced programs and services under the Action Plan will increase to over \$53 million annually. This funding supports communities in taking action to support vulnerable children and families. Current priorities under the Action Plan are initiatives to strengthen early childhood development, support at-risk youth, address child and family poverty, and *Prevention and Support Grants* to community organizations for local efforts to integrate services.

Community education: Prekindergarten Program, Integrated School-Linked Services Initiatives, and the Northern Community Schools Pilot Program. Since 1996, Saskatchewan Education has developed new *Prekindergarten Programs* in 26 inner-city community schools to extend the learning program to three- and four-year-old children who need additional support to become successful learners. The early intervention program focuses on fostering social development and self-esteem, promoting language development, and nurturing educational growth and school success.

Building on the successful *Community Schools Program* in the southern part of the province, a pilot *Northern Community Schools Program* has been developed to reflect the strengths and challenges of northern communities. The program provides support to schools to address the needs of at-risk students and their families. In a two-year pilot phase, ten schools will test the comprehensive framework, while five additional schools will analyse the program’s applicability within a small school setting.

Integrated School-Linked Services enable at-risk students and their families to receive holistic, coordinated human services. Several initiatives are being supported by the Saskatchewan Government to advance the integrated services agenda. Projects in both urban and rural communities bring schools, human service providers, government agencies, community groups, families, and students together to develop comprehensive, integrated service plans. The government allocated an additional \$850,000 toward these initiatives in 1997-98 and another \$600,000 in 1998-99.

Equity. An Equity Forum (comprising representatives of the department, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, some postsecondary institutions, and education partners) has been formed to advance equity in education across the province. The work of the committee is based on the understanding that equity extends equality of opportunity to include fostering a barrier-free environment where individuals benefit equally. A draft joint policy framework and action plan have been produced that encompass a broad scope of activity including:

- employment equity
- curriculum and instruction materials
- instructional and assessment practices
- cross-cultural, intercultural, and anti-racism education
- equity in access and benefit; school environment; student development
- the school and the community
- monitoring
- leadership development and organizational change and development

The draft action plan is intended to create a climate for change and commitment to equity that is needed to move issues of equity in education forward at a faster pace. It outlines a number of activities to:

- foster commitment to equity
- implement a collaborative and community-based process for change
- secure resources
- nurture leadership
- develop indicators of success

The role of Saskatchewan Education in equity or human rights issues has not traditionally been investigative or regulatory, but rather to provide policy leadership and direction as well as implementation supports. As a result of the policy framework, equity in education programs will be developed at the school division level to ensure that all children have equal access and benefit to quality education.

Multimedia Learning Strategy. This strategy includes the development of a provincial Multimedia Learning network and funding for wiring and cabling in Saskatchewan schools and for multimedia educational software development. Core Curriculum documents are being converted to an electronic format for distribution through Saskatchewan's Education Web site. These documents are being enhanced through the inclusion of links to bibliographies, links to other Web sites, discussion areas, and teacher developed units. These exciting new options mean that teachers can now have access to additional resources through an interactive, multimedia format.

Saskatchewan Education has taken a lead role in bringing the Community Access Program to more Saskatchewan communities. A partnership with Industry Canada will provide for up to an additional 250 communities becoming community access sites in Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan Education has also worked with school divisions, communities, and Industry Canada on such projects as SchoolNet, Computers for Schools, and Digital Collections. All of these projects involve the use of advanced technology to support the teaching and learning process in the province.

Postsecondary education

University revitalization. With the increasingly broad and active participation of both university communities, progress is being made on a number of fronts towards greater collaboration and complementarity. New forms of consultation have combined with internal and external reviews to bring both universities closer to the goal of affordable access to sustainable excellence.

The process, which culminated in the *MacKay Report* (fall 1996), produced 17 joint proposals from the university presidents as well as a number of shared challenges and recommendations. The government's response to *MacKay, Public Interest and the Revitalization of Saskatchewan's Universities*, established a clear

basis for dialogue between government and the universities while giving further impetus to processes initiated by Harold MacKay.

In June 1998, Edward DesRosiers and his associates will complete a series of eight reports that have engaged both universities in a thorough reconsideration of university funding and the balance among instruction, research, and community service at both institutions. Concurrently, the government has enhanced the provincial contribution to student assistance, and is using the Pan-Canadian Expectations Project to share ideas and concerns with other jurisdictions. The post-DesRosiers phase of long-term revitalization will proceed within a clear provincial framework and an emergent pan-Canadian one, guided by explicit expectations of learners, institutions, communities, and government.

Expectations for postsecondary education. Under the aegis of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, Saskatchewan has taken a lead role in the Postsecondary Expectations Project since its inception two years ago. Saskatchewan looks forward to working with other jurisdictions on refining expectations further and on pursuing the first two themes of research and learner pathways and transitions.

Student financial assistance. In August 1998, Saskatchewan will introduce the *Provincial Bursary Program* for students eligible for student loans assistance, that will contain the level of debt a student incurs to achieve a postsecondary education. Bursary assistance will be provided in lieu of a loan to students with financial need over \$180 per week of study.

Under the bursary program, all students with dependants are eligible to receive increased bursary assistance. This change recognizes the increased costs of raising a family and the financial barrier this may create in pursuing a postsecondary education. The Provincial Bursary Program is integrated with the federal Canada Study Grant.

Technology-enhanced learning. Through the provincial Multimedia Learning Strategy launched in 1995, the department has been working with the postsecondary education and training sector to develop new approaches to teaching and learning using technology. The broad goals are to use technology to increase quality, access, and flexibility of programs and to enable learners to acquire skills needed for participation in a society increasingly dependent on global networking and sharing of knowledge. The key components of the strategy are development of technology-mediated course materials, instructional strategies, and learner support services.

Some 40 programs are currently under way or completed. These include on-line library services and testing systems for distance learners, technology tools and strategies for teachers, computer-mediated lab instruction and templates for course development in sciences and engineering, computer-mediated adult basic education science resources, multi-mode modules for community-based social work programs, apprenticeship or entrepreneurship training, and various Web-based or CD-ROM course materials. In addition, under the Canada-Saskatchewan Strategic Initiatives Program, partners are developing on-line career services and labour market information services.

A paper, *Technology-Enhanced Learning, Phase I: Discussion Paper on the Integration of Technologies in Post-Secondary Education and Training for Saskatchewan* (December 1997), has been circulated for feedback. Among the key recommendations is the establishment of a coordinating body to foster collaborative approaches to the development of a learning environment enhanced by technologies.

Accountability. Public accountability in the postsecondary education and training system remains a high-profile issue in Saskatchewan. In 1997, two strategic documents were released by the Department of Post-

Secondary Education and Skills Training that set out broad directions for and expectations of the postsecondary education system.

The Saskatchewan Training Strategy: Bridges to Employment identified a three-year plan to better link training programs and services directly to employment and the Saskatchewan labour market. The three main objectives of the training strategy are:

- developing a skilled workforce relevant to Saskatchewan's labour market
- enhancing access and supporting opportunities for learners
- creating a coherent and effective delivery system

The Public Interest and Revitalization of Saskatchewan's Universities identified broad public priorities and directions for the university sector, including quality, access, and service to the community.

The theme of accountability featured very prominently in both strategies. The department is now collaborating with postsecondary institutions and other stakeholders to put in place accountability frameworks and mechanisms to ensure that, on an ongoing basis, expectations for the postsecondary education system are clearly defined and understood, with results and impacts, based on the expectations, reported back to learners/students, the government, and the public.

Evaluation is a key accountability mechanism of the Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training. The department is committed to a policy of systematic and ongoing evaluation as a means of ensuring continuous improvement in its policy initiatives, programs, and services. Increasing reliance on evaluation is an identifiable trend at all levels of government, and the department is increasingly required to undertake evaluation activities as a requirement of working together with other government partners in jointly undertaking postsecondary education and employment initiatives. The department is in the process of developing a formal evaluation policy for implementation in 1998.

Skills development and training

Saskatchewan Training Strategy. Under this strategy, several new initiatives are under way in the area of skills development and training, to more effectively meet the needs of the community, industry, learners, and employers. For example, some initiatives focus on increasing access and making skills training more timely and relevant to industry and community employment needs. The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Program is being modified to better meet industry needs. Basic Education will respond better to learners' needs for language, literacy, academic upgrading, and employability skills. To assist social assistance recipients in developing their skills and finding sustainable jobs, new employment programs are being designed and implemented. The Saskatchewan Training Strategy will ensure continued support to these programs as they adapt to become a truly made-in-Saskatchewan approach to skills development and training.

National/provincial youth strategies. In 1996, premiers directed provincial/territorial labour market ministers to develop a comprehensive National Youth Employment Strategy. As lead province of the Forum of Labour Market Ministers, Saskatchewan has coordinated the strategy development. Each province and territory is developing its own approach to youth employment to address the goals of the strategy, namely:

- to create opportunities for youth to develop the knowledge and skills for work
- to increase work opportunities for youth
- to help youth respond to the complex and changing nature of work
- to address the cultural and social barriers that can prevent youth from working

In Saskatchewan, an interdepartmental group has been organized to coordinate and develop a provincial youth employment strategy with implementation anticipated for September 1999.

Internet. Additional information can be found at: <http://www.gov.sk.ca/govt/educ>

MANITOBA

The education and training system in Manitoba continues to undergo comprehensive and far-reaching renewal. Virtually every aspect and level of the system is affected by this renewal — Kindergarten to senior 4, postsecondary, program development, and program delivery.

The mission of Manitoba Education and Training is to provide access to relevant education and training that is of high quality, affordable, available, and responsive, enabling Manitobans to develop their individual potential and to contribute to the economic, social, and cultural life of Manitoba in a global context.

In carrying out its mission, Manitoba Education and Training is guided by the principles of excellence, equity, openness, responsiveness, relevance, integration, and accountability. Renewal initiatives stress:

- elementary-secondary foundation skill development, standards and evaluation, school effectiveness, parent and community involvement, learning technologies, and teacher education
- enhanced partnerships across the education and training sectors
- provision of more and better information to the public
- improved accessibility to postsecondary education
- strengthened linkages between education and training and the province's economic and social development initiatives

Elementary and secondary education

Curriculum renewal and standards testing. In conjunction with the pan-Canadian and Western protocols, Manitoba works with other provinces to develop grade- and subject-specific curriculum outcomes within a common educational framework. Standards of student achievement for each of the core subject areas (i.e. language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies) are then developed in Manitoba through a consultative process with educators, scholars, industry, and community members, to determine what students need to know and be able to do at the completion of grades 3, 6, senior 1, and senior 4.

In order to ensure consistency and greater accountability of the school system for the benefit of all elementary-secondary students, Manitoba's standards-testing procedure evaluates student performance at each of the four grade levels listed above. These assessment tests are criterion-referenced, designed to measure student achievement to provincial standards.

Interdisciplinary Middle Years Multimedia Project (IMYM). IMYM is a four-phase curriculum-based research and development project arising out of *Renewing Education: New Directions*, as a result of technology being identified as a foundation skill area for all curriculum. The purpose of the IMYM project is to develop an effective instructional model that is interdisciplinary, supports the integration of multimedia technology throughout provincial curricula, and facilitates implementation of the interdisciplinary unit(s) as required. Phase 1 and 2 resulted in the development of interdisciplinary thematic multimedia-based grade 5 and 6 teaching units. Phase 3 of the IMYM project, at the grade 7 level, will begin in 1998-99.

Early Literacy Intervention Initiative. Manitoba Education and Training has allocated \$2,700,000 to support school divisions in their continuing efforts to provide early literacy intervention programming for the lowest achieving grade 1 students. Early literacy intervention programming is designed to help students in grade 1 who require assistance with reading and writing. The Early Literacy Intervention Initiative provides funding support for the following three programming categories in grade 1:

- Reading Recovery™
- externally developed early literacy intervention programming that has clearly demonstrated success in increasing the reading and writing proficiency of the lowest achieving students in grade 1, as shown in the research/literature
- locally-developed early literacy intervention programming that has clearly demonstrated success in increasing the reading and writing proficiency of the lowest achieving students in grade 1, as shown through the funding application process

Special Education Review. The provincial government has commissioned a Special Education Review which is expected to be completed in the fall of 1998. The review has three major components: a review of existing programs, policies, and practices (including a review of the research literature, as well as funding and legal aspects); structured data collection involving twelve case studies, based on school feeder systems and their communities; a comprehensive consultation process.

The purpose of the Special Education Review is to obtain information on the application, appropriateness, effectiveness, and use of policies, programs, services, and resources to achieve desired student outcomes such as graduation, and successful transition to employment, postsecondary education, or community living. The information is intended to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of school-based education and services and to strengthen learning opportunities and outcomes.

Postsecondary education

University and college renewal. Universities and colleges continue to play an increasingly important role in preparing Manitoba youth for future career opportunities. In order to facilitate and coordinate system-wide policy development related to postsecondary education delivery across the province, Manitoba has created a Council on Postsecondary Education. Key issues being addressed include articulation, credit transfer, and accountability. In response to the needs of learners, Manitoba's universities and colleges continue to enhance existing program offerings and to introduce new ones. Recent examples of new programs include a Rural Development Masters Program at Brandon University and a Bachelor of Education with a speciality in Aboriginal Education at the University of Winnipeg.

Adult literacy. Community-based adult literacy programming and basic education in the workplace are two successful models used in Manitoba for adult literacy. Non-profit community advisory committees manage local programming with funding, coordination support, and training for practitioners and volunteers provided by the department. A rigorous accountability framework has been developed that includes criteria for successful programming, qualitative and quantitative indicators of success, and evaluation devices. A new emphasis is being placed on integrating literacy into employability skills-development programs for unemployed Manitobans.

Manitoba also has a three-level tutor/instructor certificate training program and the Certificate in Literacy and Learning for the recognition of progress of adult literacy learners. In partnership with the National Literacy Secretariat of Human Resources Development Canada, a variety of community-based innovative/developmental literacy initiatives are being introduced.

Manitoba student financial assistance. In addition to federal programs, Manitoba offers postsecondary students financial assistance through a variety of needs-based programs. Examples include Manitoba Student Loans, Manitoba Study Assistance, the Manitoba ACCESS bursary, and the Prince of Wales/Princess Anne bursary for Aboriginal students. The following four new initiatives are being introduced.

- The *Interest Relief Program* addresses the concern of growing student debt loads. The program provides up to five years of interest relief to those borrowers who are experiencing difficulty in meeting their loan repayment obligations due to insufficient income.
- The *Debt Reduction Program* will work alongside the newly announced Federal Debt Reduction Program to address concerns about growing student debt loads by reducing the Manitoba Student Loan debt for those individuals who qualify.
- The *Scholarships and Bursaries Program* has been enhanced for 1998-99 to facilitate a matching of funds raised by Manitoba's public postsecondary institutions to provide an additional \$10 million for scholarships and bursaries for Manitoba college and university students.
- The *Learning Tax Credit* has been reformatted to complement the above initiatives, by reducing the refundable tax credit for tuition to 7 per cent (with a cap of \$700 per student) and redirecting funds to those in greatest need.

Skills development and training

Youth programs. Manitoba offers a variety of programs for youths aged 16-24 to facilitate the school-to-work transition and to improve their employment prospects. Examples include:

- grants to help cover business start-up costs
- wage incentives to businesses that can provide technology- or computer-related jobs to Manitoba youth
- part-time work opportunities for postsecondary students to help them earn money and gain career-related experience while they are attending school
- wage incentives for eligible employers to create summer employment opportunities for youth
- placement of youth in summer positions within the provincial government and related organizations
- brokerage of the delivery of training and employment assistance to help young Manitobans on social assistance to gain independence and make a successful transition to work
- career-related volunteer placements with provincial government departments
- recruitment, selection, and referral services to facilitate the hiring of students with disabilities

In 1997-98 Manitoba Education and Training entered a strategic partnership with the federal government (through HRDC) to provide funding to the Manitoba School Counsellors Association, enabling them to contract with Bridges Incorporated to purchase the Career Explorer Internet service. Through this initiative, Manitoba youth are making more informed choices about future career paths. A *Acustomized@Manitoba* career news service will soon be available to all Internet users.

Social policy reform. The ongoing evolution of social policy in Manitoba has required the review and modification of existing programming and the creation of innovative and efficient programs that support the objectives of social policy reform. Emphasis is on promoting economic independence for employable income-assistance recipients through employment preparation, targeted skills training, on-the-job training opportunities, and job finding/job placement services. Strong linkages are being developed with private sector employers, and employer incentives are available to encourage the hiring and training of income assistance recipients.

The Canada-Manitoba Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) of April 1997 transferred program and operating responsibility in November 1997. The LMDA provides Manitoba an opportunity to integrate federal and provincial training and employment services for unemployed Manitobans within the provincial economic framework. The objectives are:

- to improve client service and reduce duplication through a fully-integrated continuum of employment and training programs and services for unemployed Manitobans
- to ensure access and linkages to employment and training programs and services that are relevant and responsive to the needs of employers, communities, and the changing economy
- to encourage local participation in the planning and delivery of programs and services through partnerships with communities and employers
- to foster self-reliance and personal commitment by individuals to achieve self-sufficiency through sustainable employment

Sixteen Employment Centres have been established throughout the province, many of which are collocated with other government service providers.

Manitoba has been actively involved in the development of the new National Child Benefit (NCB) program. Under a proposed three-year National Child Benefit reinvestment plan, funding will be made available to Manitoba to develop new strategies to help income assistance and low income families to enter and remain in the workforce. Education and training will accomplish this by providing employment placements, training and educational upgrading to income assistance and low income parents.

System-wide initiatives

Learning technologies. In order to facilitate rapid and effective advancement of educational technologies in Manitoba, a number of initiatives have been implemented that emphasize community-based infrastructures for lifelong learning. The regional-based advisory Council on Learning Technologies (COLT) is leading the development of a provincial strategic planning framework to create a common technology infrastructure that links initiatives and facilitates student skill development across the Manitoba education sector. The Manitoba Education Research and Learning Information Networks (MERLIN) agency facilitates linkages between education institutions, government, and the private sector. The province is:

- supporting the application of technology in classrooms
- integrating multimedia resources into the elementary-secondary curriculum
- facilitating professional development for teachers via technology
- establishing technology and science resource centres across the province to provide high technology applications to industrial arts and vocational education
- establishing two-way video system linkages across Manitoba high schools
- extending access to postsecondary programming
- supporting the Computers for Schools and Libraries initiative for upgrading and placing donated used computers into Manitoba schools

Aboriginal education and training. In an effort to address the education and training needs of Aboriginal people, Manitoba Education and Training has developed an Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy. A comprehensive three-year Action and Implementation Plan is designed:

- to increase high school graduation rates of Aboriginal students
- to increase participation of Aboriginal people in the labour market
- to strengthen and increase partnerships with Aboriginal people

Demographic factors, as well as Aboriginal people's aspirations for greater self-determination and economic independence present an opportunity for the government to work collaboratively with Aboriginal communities to realize mutual goals in education and training.

Teacher education. A review of Manitoba's teacher training programs is being conducted to correspond to the changing needs of teachers within today's elementary and secondary schools. New programs should be in place across all the universities' faculties of education in September 1998.

Education indicators. Accountability is a major thrust of the Government of Manitoba. The availability of relevant and accurate information on the education and training system is vital. At the elementary-secondary, postsecondary, and labour-market levels, information needs are being identified and data collection mechanisms enhanced to permit the department to evaluate the effectiveness of our education and training system. An Education Indicators Program has been created to help assess the performance of the province's K-senior 4 education system, promote critical inquiry, support provincial and local decision-making, and where possible, enhance educational practice. An interorganizational committee of education stakeholders has been created to provide advice to the department on education indicator development and utilization.

Sustainable development. The Government of Manitoba has identified sustainable development as one of the cornerstones of its overall economic, environmental, and social agenda. Through a consultative process with Manitobans, an Education Strategy is being developed to increase public awareness, acceptance, and commitment to the incorporation of sustainable-development principles into everyday decision-making.

Internet. Further information can be obtained at: <http://www.gov.mb.ca/manitoba>

ONTARIO

Key themes for education in Ontario are captured in the following vision statement:

Ontario will provide each of its students with the best quality education in Canada. Guided by parents, we will focus on measurable results, benchmarked against the world. We will work with skilled and dedicated teachers and principals in a safe, disciplined environment to ensure that every student is prepared to succeed. An Ontario education will offer our students a passport to jobs, hope, opportunity and growth, now and in the 21st century.

The following outlines recent major reforms and initiatives in the three areas — elementary/secondary education, postsecondary education, and skills development and training — for which the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training has responsibility.

Elementary and secondary education

Restructuring for accountability and effectiveness. The following are major initiatives under this theme.

School board reform. The *Fewer School Boards Act, 1997* replaced the existing 129 major school boards with 72 new district school boards, and reduced the number of trustees from about 1,900 to 700. The 37 existing isolated and hospital school boards were maintained as school authorities. Within this new structure, trustees can concentrate on their core objective: being guardians of education in their communities. School boards will be able to renew their focus on the students in the school and devote their efforts to student achievement, reporting, and curriculum implementation. This bill also established the Education Improvement Commission whose powers and responsibilities are to oversee the transition to the new system of education governance in Ontario.

The *Education Quality Improvement Act, 1997* continued Ontario's implementation of reform begun with the *Fewer School Boards Act*. Maximum average class sizes were legislated. Starting in the 1998-99 school year, average class size on a local board basis must not exceed 25 pupils in elementary school classes and 22 pupils in secondary school classes. Instructional days at the elementary level were increased from 185 to 190 by reducing the number of professional activity days from nine to four. At the secondary level, professional activity days were also reduced from nine to four, and examination days were reduced from as many as 15 to a maximum of 10.

The province assumed responsibility for setting the level of local education property taxes. Collective bargaining between teachers and school boards was placed under the provisions of Ontario's *Labour Relations Act*.

The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO). Legislation establishing the EQAO as an independent agency received royal assent in June 1997. EQAO was established to conduct quality reviews, develop and implement a province-wide performance indicators system for student achievement, and to report annually on education quality issues within the province. The agency operates at arm's length from the Ministry of Education and Training, subject to a seven- to nine-member Board of Directors. The EQAO has responsibility for a considerable range of activities and will:

- design and implement a comprehensive program of student assessment
- provide advice to the minister on assessment policy

- lead Ontario's participation in national and international assessment indicators projects (for example, the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS) and the School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP))
- promote research in best practices in assessment and accountability
- conduct quality reviews in cooperation with school boards
- report to the minister, the public, and the education community on system quality issues, recommending improvements where appropriate

The Ontario College of Teachers. The college was established by legislation in 1996 as a self-funding, self-regulating body that will oversee and coordinate, in the public interest, licensing, professional discipline, and recurrent career-long training for teachers. The college promotes professional recognition and status for teachers and provides leadership to the profession in developing standards of practice for teaching and a framework for career-long learning. Membership in the college will be mandatory for educators employed in provincially-funded schools whose job requires teaching qualifications. The role and responsibilities of the college include:

- developing specifications for teacher education programs
- accrediting both pre-service and ongoing teacher-education programs
- developing clear and exemplary standards of practice for teachers
- developing procedures for teacher certification and ongoing professional learning
- administering a complaints process for students and parents; and where appropriate, applying professional discipline or sanctions on members of the profession

The college operates at arm's length from the Ministry of Education and Training, and is governed by a 31-member council composed of 17 elected member-teachers and 14 public representatives (parents, business, and community leaders etc.) appointed by the province.

Parent involvement. By legislation, every school in Ontario is now required to have a school council made up of parents, the principal, a teacher, a non-teaching staff member, and community members. In the case of high schools, students are also included on school councils. Currently, school councils advise the principal, and the school board where appropriate, on a wide range of issues that may include such matters as discipline, codes of conduct, ensuring a safe, healthy school environment, and responding to local priorities (for example, the local school calendar, curriculum and program goals, school budget priorities, community partnerships, and the local coordination of services for children and youth). The Education Improvement Commission, created by government to oversee the transition to a new system of governance, will be conducting consultations on the feasibility of strengthening the role of school councils, and of increasing parental involvement in education governance.

Specific accountability measures. Accountability is a key priority of the Government of Ontario. A new *Public Sector Accountability Act* was announced in the 1997 Budget Speech and is now under development by Ontario's Ministry of Finance. This legislation will affect all ministries and organizations funded by Ontario, and set explicit standards for the reporting of financial and operational performance. Under the proposed act, organizations will be required to:

- report their financial activities in accordance with the recommendations of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants
- adopt policies that will ensure that the private sector has an open opportunity to compete to provide services to their organizations
- adopt and publicly report on organizational performance using private and public sector benchmarks

As well, a performance measurement system introduced by Management Board of Cabinet will require all ministries to identify, publish, and commit to explicit outcomes, performance measures, and targets or standards. The outcomes, performance measures, and targets for the Ministry of Education and Training (and other ministries) are now published in an annual business plan, and are used to guide ministry programs and services. The business plan makes programs and expenditure on education more transparent by identifying:

- ministry core businesses, including a goal and a result for each
- budgets and staffing levels for each core business
- key strategies for the fiscal year
- current-year performance measures
- progress made during the preceding year

The ministry has also established the Advisory Panel on Accountability to permit an ongoing dialogue between the ministry and its delivery partners and private-sector experts on accountability, performance measurement, and controllership. The work of this advisory panel will relate to all divisions of the Ministry.

Curriculum and assessment reform. A *rigorous, new curriculum* with clearly-articulated standards will challenge Ontario students to succeed. The languages and mathematics components of the new curriculum were introduced in September 1997, and the science and technology component followed in March 1998. The remaining subjects for the elementary grades will be in place by September 1998.

Province-wide testing for all grade 3 students was implemented in 1997. Individual results were released to parents in June 1997, with board-by-board results published in the fall. As a regular practice, tests of a sample of grade 6 and grade 9 students in mathematics and languages will occur in alternating years, and literacy tests for all grade 10 students will begin in the year 2000.

A *new provincial report card* is now being used in 30 per cent of Ontario's elementary schools, with province-wide utilization slated for September 1998. These new report cards are designed to provide parents with clear, concise information about their children's progress throughout the school year, and are linked directly to the grade-by-grade standards set out in the new curriculum documents.

Secondary school reform is of major importance within a continuum of other changes in Ontario's education system. The government consulted broadly on the new four-year high school program that will begin in September 1999. The new high school curriculum will emphasize relevance and responsiveness to students and will introduce a graduated type of streaming that will keep as many options open as possible. Students in grade 9 will not be locked into a stream; in grades 10, 11, and 12, there will be transfer courses that will allow students to move between streams if they so choose. Courses in grades 11 and 12 will be streamed according to whether the student's chosen destination is university, college or work. Moreover, the relevant courses will be developed with input from colleges, universities, and the private sector, to ensure that both students and their parents have confidence that their high school program will prepare them for their chosen paths.

A *new teacher-advisor program* will be phased in over three years to complement the work of guidance counsellors and other teachers. Teacher-advisors will monitor the academic performance of a small group of students, help to optimize course and student selection, and act as key school contacts for parents.

The new *four-year high school program* will require 30 credits of 110 hours each. Eighteen of the credits will be compulsory, a fact that reflects public desire for increased emphasis on mathematics, language, science, and preparation for responsible citizenship. To encourage civic responsibility and promote community values, all students will be required to complete a minimum of 40 hours of community involvement, which will be broadly

defined and fulfilled by students as a self-directed project independent of teacher supervision, prior to high school graduation. The Minister of Education and Training has announced the establishment of a *provincial partnership council* (to be composed of representatives from government, education, business, and the voluntary sector) that will promote the expansion of cooperative education, work experience, and school-to-work programs and increase private sector participation in these initiatives at both the provincial and local level.

There are three other important features imbedded in the new high school program:

- A *compulsory literacy test* will be conducted before the end of grade 10, and the results will be recorded on the student's transcript; a passing grade will be a prerequisite for graduation from high school.
- Students will be able to receive credits without formally taking a course by means of a *prior learning assessment (PLA)* process. High school students may obtain a maximum of four PLA credits, two in any one subject, through an evaluative test or other demonstrable achievements such as projects, portfolios, and laboratory work.
- While the new high school program will have the requisite rigour and relevance to prepare students for postsecondary education and work, it will be less complicated than the present system, with *fewer courses and less streaming*.

Two new regulations will have a constructive impact on *special education*. One delineates the composition, powers, duties, and practices of special education advisory committees, together with the relevant responsibilities of district school boards and school authorities. A second regulation, that pertains to the identification and placement of exceptional pupils, ensures specific outcomes, including the development of an individual education plan for each exceptional pupil, a transition plan for non-gifted pupils age 14 or older, and a fairer appeal process achieved through balanced representation on appeal boards.

French-language education. French-language schools have the specific mandate to maintain and foster a French-language learning environment. Because they operate in a minority-language context, French-language schools face particular challenges in offering the full range of programs, services, and delivery modes that are required to support student achievement in an effective way. The Ministry of Education and Training has identified two strategies that are particularly critical to the success of French-language students:

- the creation of 12 French-language district school boards includes the development and the implementation of communications and information technology networks through which French-language schools can provide quality educational services over wide geographic areas
- an Early Reading Intervention Program designed to address the particular reading needs of at-risk children from grades 1 to 3 — this program provides teachers with specific training on how to use language-teaching methods that are adapted for children who learn in a minority-language context

Enhancing transitions/building partnerships. Ontario's plan for education and training reform includes expansion of processes to facilitate student mobility. Prior learning assessment and recognition and cross-accreditation mechanisms are being developed to ensure the achievement and the portability of credits between programs, institutions, and workplaces. A new framework for approving apprenticeship classroom training will be developed and applied to both college and private-sector training institutions. The emphasis of the new framework at all levels of education and training will be to ensure quality program delivery, to expand the choices of programs and options available to students, employers and taxpayers, and to increase accountability to and for all stakeholders. The ministry will work at all levels of education and training to promote more efficient and effective linkages within the education system and with the world of work.

Information technology. Information technology is now recognized as an integral aspect of contemporary education. The *Technology Incentive Partnership Program (TIPP)* was designed to ensure that schools in the province remain in stride with developments in information technology. A major goal of the program is to produce new technologies and educational resources to be shared widely among school boards across the province. TIPP encourages partnerships among school boards, faculties of education, and the private sector through improved integration of information technology within the elementary and secondary school system. The TIPP partnership model has created 75 new projects involving over 600 partners. A provincial investment of \$40 million has yielded a total investment of over \$100 million in innovative classroom technologies.

Funding that is student-focussed and accountable. There have been a number of significant developments in Ontario's approach to education finance reform. In March 1998, the minister announced that for the first time in the province's history, classroom spending would be defined and protected in a new, student-focussed approach to funding that would see increased classroom spending and reduced administrative cost. The new funding model replaces 34 previous grant categories with 11 transparent and simplified grants. This model now provides one basic universal per-pupil Foundation Grant for each student, no matter where he or she lives in Ontario. In addition to the Foundation Grant, nine special purpose grants will cover areas such as early learning, special education, language, geography, transportation, and adult and continuing education. There will also be a Pupil Allocation Grant to pay the costs of running, maintaining, and constructing school buildings.

Key highlights of the new student-focussed approach include:

- more than \$1 billion for special education (funding for students who require high-cost special programs and services will now be portable and will move with the student if he or she changes schools)
- a one-time \$100 million investment in learning materials (textbooks, software)
- a Class Size Protection Fund of \$1.2 billion over the next three years to ensure that on a board-wide basis, average class size does not rise above 25 pupils in elementary school classes or 22 pupils in secondary school classes
- a Learning Opportunities Grant (\$185 million in 1998-99) will provide extra help for students at-risk because of social or economic conditions in their family or community
- a Geographic and School Authorities Grant (\$176 million in 1998-99) will assist boards in areas of the province that are rural, remote or sparsely populated, and which therefore incur higher costs
- support for early learning that will provide all district boards with the resources for quality education in the important early years — beginning in the 1998-99 school year, the province will guarantee funding for early learning programs, including junior Kindergarten, to ensure that all young children are given a successful start in school; all school boards currently providing junior Kindergarten will receive funding to continue this program; boards that currently do not offer junior Kindergarten will receive funding if they choose to offer a JK program, or they may choose to offer alternative early learning programs

A carefully-planned phase-in of the new approach to funding, together with a total of \$385 million in transition and restructuring assistance, will provide Ontario's district school boards with the time, stability, flexibility, and resources required to make a successful transition to the new funding model.

One of the most significant aspects of the new funding legislation is to reduce by 29 per cent the amount spent by boards on administration and to establish a new upper limit on school board administrative expenditure, to ensure that resources are focussed on the classroom. School boards continue to be responsible for setting their budgets. The Minister of Education and Training has committed to stable funding for elementary and secondary funding over the next three years.

Efficiency and accountability are crucial goals for the new funding model. The new emphasis on accountability

will let parents and citizens see where their tax-generated education dollars are being used. The new funding model includes targeted allocations that will be monitored by the province to ensure that funds are spent appropriately and for the intended purposes. As part of Ontario's new student-focused approach to funding education, school boards will be required to give parents and taxpayers an annual *financial report card* showing clearly what a board's estimated budget was and how much was actually spent in and outside the classroom. Every year, the Ministry of Education and Training will publish a summary *Report to Taxpayers*, showing what each school board in the province has spent. Parents and taxpayers will be able to see the spending decisions are being made by each school board.

Postsecondary education

Funding. On December 15, 1997, the government announced an expenditure envelope for postsecondary education for the next two years. This envelope provides funding for operating grants to colleges, universities, and student support and will total \$2.79 billion in 1998-99, an increase of \$30 million over 1997-98. In 1999-2000, the envelope will be \$2.84 billion, an increase of \$80 million over 1997-98 levels. A two-year commitment supports the role of college and university boards of governors in strategic planning and administrative management.

Tuition fees. Boards of governors at Ontario colleges and universities may, where they deem it necessary to improve the quality of student programs, increase tuition fees by up to 5 per cent in 1998-99 and up to a further 5 per cent in 1999-2000. If boards decide to invest in additional educational program improvements, they may approve an additional increase of up to 5 per cent in each of these two years. Institutions that increase their fees will be required to set aside a portion of their operating grant equal to 30 per cent of any new revenues from these increases for assistance to students in need. Institutions that increase fees will be required to help address shortages in scientific and technical programs where demand from prospective students and employers greatly exceeds the places available.

Accountability. The ministry is working with colleges and universities to improve accountability to students for the quality of the teaching and learning opportunities they provide. In keeping with government's commitment to improve overall accountability through the demonstration of results, the ministry and the colleges worked together to develop a way to measure the performance of the college system. Five key performance indicators (KPI) were identified and defined, and implementation plans to collect and report the KPI were developed. Beginning in 1998-99, college performance will be measured based on the following KPI: graduate employment, graduate satisfaction, employer satisfaction, student satisfaction, and graduation rate.

Pilot projects to assist learning disabled students. The Learning Opportunities Task Force on the integration and support of learning disabled students in postsecondary educational institutions has completed its initial work. In the May 1998 Ontario Budget, it was announced that nine pilot projects which would benefit more than 2000 learning-disabled students will be funded. Over a four-year period, the ministry will provide \$30 million for pilot projects to help learning disabled students make the transition to colleges and universities.

Ontario Research and Development Challenge Fund. In December 1997, the government implemented the Ontario Research and Development Challenge Fund (ORDCF) to provide \$500 million over ten years to promote business-university partnerships and research excellence. This investment is expected to lever up to \$2.5 billion from other sources, including the private sector and federal programs such as the Canada Foundation for Innovation. The fund will support proposals for:

- leading-edge research that would benefit industry
- state-of-the-art equipment and facilities
- incentives for gifted researchers to work in Ontario

Income-contingent loan repayment plan. The May 1997 Ontario Budget committed Ontario to working with the federal government to implement an income-contingent student loan program. In the interim, the ministry is proceeding with a variety of actions that can be undertaken on a unilateral basis to assist students:

- re-introduce grants for students through the \$300 million Ontario Student Opportunity Grants
- provide interest relief to low-income and unemployed graduates for up to two years after graduation
- require universities and colleges to provide student assistance by setting aside 30 per cent of additional tuition fee revenue from fee increases (as noted above)
- require postsecondary institutions to provide better information to students on completion, placement, and loan default rates of recent graduates
- provide student aid from approximately \$560 million in permanent endowments through an Ontario Student Opportunity Trust Fund

Reducing student loan defaults. The overall Ontario Student Loan default rate for students attending postsecondary institutions in Ontario was 23.5 per cent in 1997, an increase of almost 5 percentage points over 1996. The ministry's business plan requires that the overall default rate be reduced to less than 10 per cent within the next five years. Steps taken by the government to reduce the cost to taxpayers of student loan defaults include:

- reviewing ways to introduce more flexible loan repayment schedules that are sensitive to graduates' incomes
- providing Ontario Student Opportunity Grants so that no student will incur more than \$7,000 of debt per year of study
- accessing income tax refunds to offset amounts owed on loans that have gone into default
- screening the credit history of new loan applicants for repeat instances of credit delinquency/default
- requiring lenders to report students' loan repayment experience to credit bureaus
- sharing the cost of loan defaults with institutions whose students have high default rates

Ontario Student Opportunity Trust Funds (OSOTF). The OSOTF initiative was announced in the May 1996 Ontario Budget to encourage companies and individuals to contribute funds for Ontario postsecondary students. Under the terms of this initiative, every college and university had the opportunity to establish an OSTF. The province agreed to match any donation to these trust funds made before March 31, 1997. Monies from each fund will be used to assist academically-qualified individuals who, for financial reasons, would not otherwise be able to attend college or university.

OSOTF fundraising has been extremely successful. The funds raised, with the province's matching contributions, will provide approximately \$560 in endowment funds at Ontario's colleges and universities. The institutions estimate that the interest from these funds will provide about \$28 million per year for bursaries. Over the next ten years, it is anticipated that 185,000 students will be assisted by this program.

In May 1998, the government announced a special Access to Opportunities Program to enable twice as many students to enroll in computer science and high-demand engineering programs. Over the next three years, \$150 million will be invested to implement this program, providing up to 17,000 new opportunities for students each year.

Skills development and training

Apprenticeship. In January 1998, with input from key apprenticeship partners such as employers, apprentices, unions, business associations, community colleges, and educators/trainers, the government announced its plans to reform the apprenticeship system. Apprenticeship training will be reformed by giving industry a stronger role; increasing opportunities for young people to explore and pursue apprenticeship careers; eliminating unnecessary government regulation; and introducing a new funding strategy to ensure apprentices can afford and access quality training.

The objectives for apprenticeship reform are to maintain the fundamentals of the system while allowing for the expansion of apprenticeship to new trades and areas of economic growth, stronger partnerships with industry and greater stakeholder ownership of the system, a more transparent framework that is flexible and responsive to the training needs of industry and essential protections and controls in areas of consumer and worker health and safety.

Discussions with industry stakeholders and working groups are now taking place. New legislation is expected, with pilot programs for new tuition and financial assistance arrangements scheduled for the fall of 1998. Apprenticeship initiatives having an impact on youth will build on reforms initiated for Ontario's high school system, including the expansion of work experience and school-to-work programs.

The Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) allows students to complete studies for their high school diploma while they work at an apprenticeship for cooperative education credits. This program will soon be redesigned and be placed on a better financial footing to make it easier for school boards and industry to participate.

Also helping youth to succeed in today's labour market, Youth Opportunities Ontario promotes a comprehensive approach by the Ministry of Education and Training to youth employment services, in cooperation with the private sector, educators, trainers, and youth. The initiatives of Youth Opportunities Ontario include:

- Job Connect, that provides leading edge job information, work experience and on-the-job training for unemployed and out-of-school youth
- Ontario Summer Jobs, that helps students earn money for their education while gaining work experience
- Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program, that allows students to begin apprenticeship training as part of their secondary school program

Ontario is currently negotiating a Labour Market Development Agreement with the federal government in order to secure benefits that would result from integrating programs to help both employers and the unemployed. The purposes are to improve services to the unemployed, to increase the relevance of training and other labour market programs for employers and employees, and to reduce federal-provincial overlap and duplication.

In partnership with the federal government and the Canadian Labour Force Development Board, Ontario has also sponsored the development of Local Boards in order to create an optimum training and adjustment system across the province. There are currently 23 fully operational local boards, one which will be operational shortly, and another in which negotiations between the Ministry and its local partners are under way.

Precise accountability measures have been established for delivery partners such as the colleges of applied arts and technology, community-based non-profit organizations, etc. All delivery partners are required to submit annual audited financial statements, with other elements of accountability varying with the relationship with the program delivery agent. For example, the funding levels of delivery partners are based on criteria such as achievement of targeted results service quality; efficiency in service delivery, and value-for-money.

In the Budget Speech of May 5, 1998, the Minister of Finance noted that Ontario has a comprehensive plan to strengthen training in the workplace and get thousands of unemployed Ontarians back to work through the use of employment insurance dollars. Over the next ten years, a made-in-Ontario workplace training and employment plan, including change and redesign of the apprenticeship program, internships, on-the-job-training, and meaningful work experience programs, will direct some \$9.5 billion to Ontario's priorities and provide opportunities for 750,000 individuals per year.

Internet. The Ministry of Education and Training's web site [http:// www.edu.gov.on.ca](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca) provides comprehensive information about new developments, legislation, curriculum releases, and publications.

QUEBEC

Quebec's education reforms are aimed at refocusing the system on success. The challenge lies in moving from access for the greatest number to success for the greatest number.

Quantitative reform goals are to have at least 85 per cent of young people in any statistical group graduate from high school before age 20; at least 60 per cent obtain a college diploma; and at least 30 per cent receive a bachelor's degree. According to available data, the respective proportions now are 73 per cent, 39 per cent and 28 per cent.

Reform measures

To attain these objectives, Quebec has defined major reform measures in seven areas.

Providing services for young children

- full-day (instead of half-day) Kindergarten for five-year-olds as of September 1997
- phasing in of educational services for four-year-olds with disabilities and four-year-olds from disadvantaged areas (23.5 hours per week)
- extension of school daycare services
- review of the preschool education program and agreement with the government organization in charge of overseeing daycare services to develop a program for both four- and five-year-olds
- adjustments to the initial training and professional development of early childhood educators
- continued support for parenting sessions

Teaching the essential subjects

- review of the elementary and secondary school curricula (subjects taught, time allotted for each subject, diversification of pathways, guidelines for the programs of study, evaluation of learning, certification of studies, use of new technology) with a view to introducing the new curriculum content in the lower elementary grades as of September 1998

Giving more autonomy to schools

- amendments to the *Education Act* in order to give schools a greater say in pedagogical, budgetary, and administrative decisions, and to clarify its obligations with respect to accountability
- decentralizing of work organization as a part of collective bargaining
- publication of a policy statement on teachers' professional development
- adjustments to the initial training and professional development of school principals
- reduction of the number of school boards to 70, delimiting of new territories based on the territories of the regional county municipalities, and changeover to language-based school boards
- creation of an advisory body in each region to promote better harmonization between the levels of education
- follow-up to the plan of action on new information and communications technologies

Supporting Montreal schools

- measures targeted at 95 elementary schools and 23 secondary schools considered to be in a vulnerable situation in terms of student success
- creation of a strengthened cooperation zone around each target school

- investment of around \$10 million to finance the different measures planned
- framing of an educational integration and intercultural education policy

Intensifying the reform of vocational and technical education

- the objective is to quadruple, over the next five years, the number of vocational education diplomas awarded to students under age 20
- adoption of a communications strategy to promote vocational and technical education in the school boards and colleges
- extension of services and opening of new places for students in programs
- implementation, on a larger scale, of the components of an experimental program designed to provide access to vocational education after the third year of secondary school (component 5), development of integrated secondary/college programs (component 4), and development of programs leading to semi-skilled trades (component 2)
- cooperation in setting up an apprenticeship system
- increased enrolment in cooperative (work-study) programs
- redesign of the general education courses that are part of college-level technical programs, as recommended by the *Conseil supérieur de l'éducation*
- identification of programs between which educational institutions can establish bridges and improvement of harmonization between the levels of education
- adoption, in each region, of a three-year plan to broaden the range of vocational and technical education options

Consolidating and rationalizing postsecondary education

College

- amendments to legislation and regulations in order to give colleges more autonomy, to build flexibility into the administrative framework, and to encourage the creation of regional colleges and the grouping of services
- introduction of a new financial incentive to encourage students to succeed (payment by students of a special fee for failed courses)
- follow-up to the three-year plan of action on new information and communications technologies (1996-99)

University

- support to the conference of rectors and principals of Quebec universities (*Conférence des recteurs et des principaux des universités - CREPUQ*) in creating a committee on the rationalization of programs
- reviewing of funding rules for universities on the basis of the proposals of a working group created for this purpose
- development of a policy on university education, a kind of social contract between Quebec society and the universities

Providing better access to continuing education

- development of a policy on continuing education in order to clarify ministerial policy guidelines with respect to the services offered and the respective roles of the various players involved in this area

At least two of these measures—intensifying the reform of vocational and technical education and providing better access to continuing education—will have a direct impact on Quebec students' transition from education to working life.

Public debate of education issues has heightened public awareness of the need to update and remodel the education system. The point is not to rebuild from the ground up but to implement measures that will ensure the system adapts to changes on the horizon as we approach the new millennium.

Internet. Further information on the reform measures is available on the Internet site of the Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec at the following address: <http://www.meq.gouv.qc.ca>

NEW BRUNSWICK

Elementary and secondary education

New Brunswick remains committed to ensuring that each child receives an education of the highest quality and develops the attributes needed to be a lifelong learner, to achieve personal fulfillment and to contribute to a productive, just, and democratic society. Our renewed education system is based on a partnership between parents of pupils and the school system, who together determine the direction, character, and priorities of the education provided to our province's children.

Education Act. A new *Education Act* came into force in December 1997, replacing the old *Schools Act* and representing a major shift in the direction of public education. It is the most enabling education legislation of its kind, and relies heavily on the guidance of the parent-based committee structure, and the expertise of staff to operate the system within the framework of the legislation. The *Education Act* introduced a new, unique governance structure, and other education reforms as follows.

The principles of equity, equality, and duality have been entrenched in the Act, and the dual-language system of education has been strengthened. Every francophone student in the province has the right to receive an education in a French school, governed and operated within the francophone education sector.

The roles and responsibilities of the key partners in education — students, parents, teachers, principals, directors of education, superintendents, and the Minister of Education — have been refined and clearly defined.

Beginning in September 1998, school attendance will be compulsory at age five, and Kindergarten will be the compulsory school entry point. Beginning in 1999, school attendance will be compulsory until a student has either graduated or reached the age of 18. A School-Leaving Age Task Force has been established to address issues relating to the extension of the school-leaving age.

A New Brunswick high school diploma will be granted to all public school students who successfully complete a program of studies prescribed by the minister.

Changes have been made to the process by which teachers' certificates are reviewed in cases of non-professional conduct. More timely action can now be taken in the interests of child protection. The Minister's Advisory Board was replaced with a structure that incorporates an Appeal Board on Teacher Certification.

Structural reform. With the dissolution of school boards in 1996, a new parent-based governance structure has been developed and fully implemented across the province. School Parent Advisory Committees (SPACs) are elected at every school to advise the principal on school improvement issues. The SPAC parent representatives elect representatives to each of the 18 District Parent Advisory Councils (DPACs). These councils advise the director of education and superintendent on district performance and education planning issues. There are two provincial Boards of Education, one for the anglophone and one for the francophone education sector. Provincial Board members are elected from the DPACs. The Provincial Boards work in conjunction with the Minister of Education on such matters as the annual education and expenditure plans for their respective sectors. A Parental Governance Review Committee is assessing the structure's effectiveness and will submit its recommendations this fall.

Administrative restructuring has accompanied the changes to the governance structure. Superintendents report directly to the anglophone or francophone Assistant Deputy Minister of Educational Services, and all school and district staff are employees of the Department of Education. This has improved accountability throughout the

system. Initiatives to accommodate the structural changes and to streamline the system have positively affected the delivery of administrative services at the school districts and head office.

Improvement planning. As of the 1997-98 school year, each school must have a school improvement plan (SIP) in effect. The SIP is prepared each year by the principal, in cooperation with the SPAC and school community, listing priority areas and strategies for the improvement of learning. District education plans, prepared by the directors of education in consultation with their DPACs, identify priorities for the improvement of learning in the school district as a whole.

Provincial education plans and provincial expenditure plans are prepared annually by the Provincial Boards of Education in conjunction with the Minister of Education. Separate plans are prepared for the francophone and anglophone education sectors. The provincial education plans include:

- a detailed vision for public education (including goals and standards)
- a strategy identifying educational priorities, objectives, and a work plan
- accountability measures

Provincial expenditure plans focus on the manner in which resources are allocated to programs and services, including the funding norms and guidelines and budgets for instruction, maintenance, pupil transportation, and administration.

Program development and assessment. Some of the many initiatives in the area of program development and assessment are as follows.

Grade 9 has now been incorporated into the high school program in both anglophone and francophone education sectors. Committees in each sector are reviewing the effectiveness of their respective four-year high school program.

Francophone sector. The francophone provincial education plan has targeted the following priorities for attention:

- learning of French, mathematics, science, and technology
- the continued implementation and refinement of the renewed elementary and high school programs
- use of instructional time
- homework
- use of the new information and communication technologies
- parental involvement
- student life
- discipline

Policies concerning homework and advertising in schools have been developed in conjunction with the Provincial Board of Education for the francophone sector. The francophone sector also has several initiatives under way to improve achievement in French first language including increased instructional time and updated curriculum at the elementary level, new textbooks at the high school level, and the publication of provincial standards in French for distribution to parents.

Anglophone sector. The anglophone provincial education plan has identified the following priorities heading into the 1998-99 school year:

- student discipline
- continued implementation and assessment of early years, middle, and high school programs
- review of high school semestering and French immersion
- improvement of communications within the education structure
- strategies to improve programs in art, music, physical education, mathematics, and science
- enrichment and remediation programs
- expansion of the provincial assessment program to include testing at the elementary level
- professional development of teachers
- education of First Nations students
- the availability and use of information technology

The anglophone sector is also undertaking an initiative to identify potential new strategies to improve student achievement in mathematics. A discussion paper entitled *Mathematics-It Really Counts* was released jointly by the Department of Education and the University of New Brunswick and discussed at a math forum leading to the development and implementation of a provincial action plan.

Positive learning environment. School discipline has been identified as one of the main priorities of teachers and the Provincial Boards of Education. As part of the commitment to creating positive, disruption-free learning and working environments in our public schools, there is a three-pronged initiative supporting positive learning and working conditions in our schools.

- A government-wide Harassment in the Workplace Policy protects all government employees, including school staff, from harassment.
- The Pupil Protection Policy, developed in consultation with the teachers' associations and introduced in 1997, ensures pupils are afforded the same right to safety as school employees.
- A draft Positive Learning Environment Policy has been developed, and underwent consultation this spring. It is intended to set standards for pupil conduct and to address discipline issues. It deals with the prevention of discipline problems through the creation of conditions that reduce the likelihood of inappropriate behaviour, and emphasizes cooperation of the entire school community.
- A Tobacco-Free Schools Policy was put into effect in March 1998.

School-work transitions. In partnership with the postsecondary education, business, and industry sectors, many initiatives are in place to boost career and skill development and to help prepare youth to move into productive careers and citizenship.

The Youth Apprenticeship Program is a high school program focussing on general employability skills and career/occupation-specific training coupled with paid work in career areas including, but not exclusive to, apprenticeable trades. Cooperative Education combines academic study with work-based learning and employability skill development, while Work Experience acquaints students with work by combining in-school instruction and short-term job placement. A Work Study program focuses on individualized education programs and transition planning. Job-shadowing activities, such as Take Our Kids To Work, provide opportunities for students to accompany their parents, relatives, or friends in different occupational roles and responsibilities.

Within the curriculum and the guidance program, initiatives to address school-work transitions include, in the anglophone sector, a Comprehensive and Developmental Guidance program for K- 12, and Career and Educational Portfolio Planning for grade 6 through graduation, and in the francophone sector, high school guidance services, practical work experience for exceptional pupils, and a program of pairing pupils with industry. Various business, vocational, and entrepreneurship courses are offered in both education sectors.

Learning associates. New Brunswick classrooms are benefiting from additional staff support at the classroom level. Learning associates work under the direction and supervision of teachers, and assist them in a variety of ways by helping them to introduce or enhance student learning activities. Through its Youth Experience Program, Human Resources Development Canada is participating with New Brunswick Education in supporting this initiative that provides valuable work experience to recent university and community college graduates while enriching the classroom learning experience.

Technology. Initiatives in the technology sector include:

- the implementation of the Strategy for Integration of Technology in Public Education in New Brunswick, that establishes a global and dynamic approach to integrating the use of technology into the curriculum
- continuing strategies to increase the ratio of students to Web-ready computers, and to establish a program of computer revitalization designed to replace obsolete equipment on a regular basis
- the establishment of a mentor/teacher program that enables teachers who have successfully integrated technology into the classroom to demonstrate the effective use of technology to other teachers
- the establishment of broadbase computer laboratories in all high schools by September 1998
- the establishment of an early adopter program that encourages schools to develop and pilot innovative approaches to using technology to improve learning
- partnering with Connect NB and the Department of Economic Development and Tourism to open over 120 Community Access Centres, 97 of which are found in rural schools — these Community Access Centres use computers and Web connections to support education, training, and business opportunities of New Brunswickers over the Internet.

Partnerships in education. Schools, districts, and the province are involved in ongoing initiatives to establish linkages among the school system and parents, community members, community-based organizations, businesses, governments, and educational institutions. Many joint ventures and parental involvement programs exist at all levels, resulting in the improvement of learning in the schools. The Provincial Boards of Education and the Department of Education are jointly developing a policy and procedure designed to promote community well-being in decisions concerning the effective use of school facilities, and to provide parents and community members with the opportunity for formal input into decision-making regarding the use and/or closure of schools in their community.

Postsecondary education

Vision of the adult learner. The province is committed to ensuring that those who provide opportunities for learning to its adult population do so in a way that is efficient and responsive to learner needs and aspirations, at least insofar as those needs and aspirations pertain to developing and maintaining individual self-sufficiency. To that end, a Vision for the Adult Learner has been developed which sets out the following key elements:

- learners should be able to move freely between the labour force and the learning force throughout their lives
- learners should accumulate credit for acquired competencies throughout their lives; acquired credit should count towards employment and further education and training should be readily available as, when, and where required
- access to appropriate learning activities should be equitable
- learners should be confident that education and training provided by publicly-supported organizations are of high quality and based on a clear statement of the outcomes and competencies that they will have the opportunity to attain
- learning achievement and relevance should be maximized
- value to the learner, in relation to both the time and money involved, should be maximized

Postsecondary innovations group. To provide guidance and leadership to postsecondary institutions in meeting the goals of the Vision for the Adult Learner, the department has established a team of professionals whose primary mission is to work closely with the institutions in achieving the goals of this vision. Some of the specific priorities being addressed at this time are:

- transitions
 - public school to postsecondary education (PSE)
 - flow through postsecondary system which could include inter or intra-institutional transfers
 - initial transition from PSE to workplace
 - lifelong learning transitions back and forth between learning to earning
- employability skills
- prior learning assessment and recognition
- credit transfer and articulated programs
- co-op and integrated work experience mechanisms
- various initiatives pertaining to universities

The New Brunswick community college system — Special Operating Agency (SOA). In 1996, the community college network was placed under a new administrative structure, the Special Operating Agency. The NBCC-SOA is established as an agency within the New Brunswick Department of Advanced Education and Labour, with special flexibilities and authorities to pursue the mission and effectively accomplish the key business initiatives specified in its business plan. Performance and accountability are measured, based on performance indicators and related targets specified in its business plan. Some key business initiatives are:

- increase NBCC regular program seats by 1,000 by 1999-2000
- double the number of cooperative education opportunities (186) by 1999-2000
- ensure the quality of training delivered by the NBCC through registration as an ISO9000 Institution by April 1999
- improve the student retention rate by one per cent per year for students registered in regular programs
- pursue the delivery of international training on a cost-recovery basis to promote New Brunswick products and services in a global market

International students. New Brunswick, in conjunction with its publically-funded universities, has embarked on a collective marketing and recruiting strategy designed to significantly increase international student enrolments by 500 additional enrolments by the year 2002.

NB TeleCampus. TeleCampus is New Brunswick's virtual forum for online teaching and learning. It is a multicampus environment, providing learners with convenient access to courses from a range of educational institutions and training companies as well as the benefits of the learning resources and communication tools of the common environment. In addition, TeleCampus will soon feature a comprehensive database of online courses available internationally.

TeleCampus is an open "one-stop shopping" environment for the development, delivery, and export of New Brunswick's educational products and services. It provides ready access to online shared resources for content providers such as a course registration and tuition payment mechanism, learning and evaluation tools, courseware promotion and sales, professional assistance and expertise, as well as financial assistance through the TeleCampus Programme Development Fund. The establishment of TeleCampus is funded by the Canada/New Brunswick Regional Economic Development Agreement.

Skills development and training

Private Occupational Training Act. The department administers the *Private Occupational Training Act*, for the purpose of regulating private occupational training and providing a reasonable level of consumer protection for students and organizations. The intended focus is to provide financial protection for students (in the event of a training organization business failure), support a vibrant, healthy private training industry, as well as facilitate quality assurance and industry self-regulation.

The key elements of the Act are:

- the requirement for private occupational training organizations to register with the department
- the establishment of a Training Completions Fund used primarily to finance student training in the event of a business failure — the fund is sourced by a one per cent student protection fee
- the establishment of a statutory corporation (Private Occupational Training Corporation), with industry and government representatives, for the purpose of administering the Training Completions Fund and facilitating voluntary accreditation, and on-going consultation
- the legislation of mandatory Student/Training Organization Contracts, with minimum requirements set out
- the program to be supported by an Internet-based Web registration system that will provide timely, accurate registration information (private, NBCC and university) along with staff access to imaged documents to support a timely response to client information requests

Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC). The Maritime provinces acknowledge the significant role in the development of postsecondary education fulfilled since 1973 by the MPHEC. These provinces have recently reaffirmed their commitment to this cooperation in postsecondary matters with the signature of a new agreement. They have set out the following four key functions for this commission:

- *quality assurance* - ensure continuous improvements in the quality of academic programs and of teaching at postsecondary institutions included within its scope
- *data and information* - ensure that information is collected, maintained, and made available for assuring the public accountability of postsecondary institutions within its scope and to assist institutions and provinces in their work
- *stimulating cooperative action* - take initiatives to stimulate cooperative action among institutions and governments where such action is likely to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Maritimes' postsecondary education system
- *administration of regional programs* - continue to develop and administer funding transfers among provinces for regional programs

In the past few years, the following are the more salient initiatives undertaken by the Commission.

Quality assurance. The MPHEC adopted its policy on quality assurance in November 1997. The policy includes the review of academic programs prior to implementation and the monitoring of institutional quality assurance policies and practices. The MPHEC has also approved guidelines for institutional quality assurance policies. The MPHEC is currently in the process of developing new guidelines for the preparation of program proposals and terms of reference for the committees charged with either program review or the monitoring function.

Accessibility study. The MPHEC released the study, *Accessibility to Postsecondary Education in the Maritimes*, in November 1997. The objective of the study was to assist the MPHEC, students, governments, institutions, and other stakeholders in postsecondary education in better understanding the dynamics at play when choosing to pursue, or not, a postsecondary education.

Conference on the state of higher education. The MPHEC organized a Conference on the State of Higher Education in the Maritimes in November 1997 under the theme of Preparing for the Third Millennium: Vision, Action and Strategies for Change in Higher Education. The conference highlighted the most current and pressing of the challenges facing higher education in the Maritimes, and provided a forum for discussion and an opportunity for its participants to explore means by which these challenges can be addressed. A second conference is planned for November 1998, with the theme of Transitions.

Postsecondary education (PSE) — articulated programs. In order to increase access to postsecondary programs and to provide learning opportunities that better reflect workplace needs, PSE institutions are now encouraged to be a partner in the development and delivery of articulated programs for which guidelines were drafted by the province through the MPHEC. An articulated program is defined as a substantively new program articulating components of a postsecondary program delivered by one institution with components of a program delivered by another. The two institutions generally grant two different types (levels) of credentials. The institutions involved with these programs will generally be a community college and a university; however, other education providers (publicly or privately funded) could also be involved.

The objective of such programs is to effectively provide graduates with a more timely access to significant jobs or earnings and ensure that they have indeed acquired both occupation-specific and general postsecondary education competencies. Over the past year, five articulated programs have been approved by the MPHEC and another four are currently at different stages of development.

Student aid. Over the last year, a number of improvements have taken place in the New Brunswick student aid system, including:

- the introduction of Provincial Interest Relief, effective August 1, 1998
- Income Based Rebate Program, effective August 1, 1999
- provincial loan limits increased from \$80 per week of study to \$110, effective August 1, 1998
- New Brunswick bursary for single students to increase from \$35 per week of study to \$50

Internet. Further information can be obtained at: <http://www.gov.nb.ca/education>

NOVA SCOTIA

Since 1994, the departmental strategic plan, *Towards a Learning Culture*, has facilitated change and resulted in the action necessary to address the education and training challenges of the 1990s. This was carried out within the context of a government expenditure control plan that compelled the education and training sector to innovate and use the scarce resources available as efficiently as possible. Within this context the following sets out, by sector, the education and training initiatives and reform measures undertaken in Nova Scotia.

Elementary and secondary education

Education restructuring. Historically, most decision-making authority in the Nova Scotia public school system was centralized in school boards and the department. It was felt that this centralized structure hindered parents, students, communities, and teachers from having an effective voice in decisions in their schools. In June 1994, a discussion paper entitled *Restructuring Nova Scotia's Education System* was released to address these issues. Following public consultations, the government announced, in June 1995, decisions regarding the roles and responsibilities of all partners in the education system, the establishment of school advisory councils, and the amalgamation of school boards in the report, *Expanding Horizons*. The new board structure, consisting of six regional boards and one provincial Acadian/Francophone school board, has now been in place for almost two full years. Legislation supporting these changes came into force in January 1996.

School councils. The *Education Act* contains provisions concerning the establishment of school advisory councils, their roles, responsibilities and organizational structure. As of spring 1998, school advisory councils have been established in 40 per cent of Nova Scotia schools. A target date of September 1999 has been established to have school advisory councils in all schools. Three documents have been published in the School Council Handbook series: *Establishing School Advisory Councils* (revised 1996); *Developing School Improvement Plans* (1996); *Writing School Annual Reports* (1998).

Junior high school network initiative. The Department of Education and Culture has launched a three-year initiative to provide increased leadership and support for junior high schools. The junior high school network focuses on researching, developing, and promoting school models that are effective, inclusive, and committed to continuous improvement. The network offers all junior high schools in the province an opportunity to receive professional assistance and targeted funding to assist them in achieving their school improvement goals. Of the province's 158 schools with junior high grades, 57 became part of the network in 1997-98. Other junior high schools will have opportunities to join the network in 1999 and 2000. The network initiative also involves conducting and publishing related research and developing resources to support professional growth programs.

Class size initiative. The department, in partnership with school boards, has embarked on a four-year initiative to reduce class sizes. In support of the partnership, Regional Class Size Action Committees have been established in each of the province's seven school boards.

These committees will develop an implementation plan that, among other things, will determine the priorities to be addressed, identify implications to the board and the department, and identify timelines and outcomes to address large class sizes in Nova Scotia public schools. As school boards implement the proposed plans over the next four years, the committees will monitor and report on progress and success in meeting the goal of reduced class sizes.

Common core curriculum. Under the auspices of the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation (APEF), a learning outcomes framework for common core curricula in mathematics, science, language arts, and social studies has been developed for the four Atlantic provinces. Stakeholders are provided opportunities for input

into regional curriculum development, for example, through response to validation drafts of curriculum documents. Foundation documents have been developed detailing curriculum outcomes and key aspects of teaching, and learning in each of the four subject areas. Curriculum guidelines have also been developed and published for grades 11 and 12 biology, chemistry, and physics; English language arts, grades p-12; mathematics, grades p-6; and social studies, grade 9. Curriculum guidelines are currently in development for mathematics, grades 7-12. Implementation of mathematics is scheduled for grade 7 in 1998-99 and for grades 8-10 the following year. Curriculum guides for science, grades p-10, are currently in development with piloting scheduled to begin in September, 1999.

As well, the department, in cooperation with the other Atlantic provinces, has been developing curriculum in the three core areas of French language arts, mathematics, and science. A foundation document has also been developed in social studies. Learning outcomes documents have been developed for immersion and French core programs, and a foundation document is being developed for the immersion program.

Common assessments. Common assessment instruments based on the Atlantic Canada common core curriculum are being developed for grade 12 English language arts, science, and mathematics. Nova Scotia has the responsibility as lead province to develop examinations for grade 12 physics, chemistry, and English language arts. Three forms of each examination are prepared each year and common administration dates are set for the region. To date, students in Nova Scotia have participated in trial examinations in physics and chemistry.

Assessments for francophone students in French-language arts, mathematics, and science are also being developed through regional cooperation facilitated by the APEF. During the 1998-1999 school year, the first instrument resulting from this cooperation, grade 4 science, will be available for administration in the region.

Public school programs. Changes in the public school program and in requirements for graduation announced by the minister in September 1996 have now been implemented. Students entering grade 10 for the first time in September 1998 will be required to obtain 18 credits for graduation, of which 13 are compulsory. The public school program now provides opportunities for high school students to earn credits toward graduation through options such as independent study credits, a challenge for credit process, approved locally-developed courses, and individual program plans. In cooperation with school boards and other partners, the department is developing a range of new course options with an applied focus. The first of these to become available will be Oceans 11 and Tourism 11. Plans for other course options to be developed include Agri-Foods, Career Transitions, Design, Electro-technologies, Entrepreneurship and Cultural Industries, Film and Video Production, Gaelic Cultural Studies, and Multimedia.

Nova Scotia school-to-work transition project. The department has entered into a \$2.4 million cost-shared research project agreement with Human Resources Development Canada. The project involves a three-year school-to-work transition pilot program in the public school system that will be responsive to the workplace (federal/provincial contributions — 80/20 per cent). The project is now in operational year three, and research results are currently being analyzed.

Ednet. The Department of Education and Culture, in conjunction with Maritime Telephone and Telegraph (MT&T), operates a Wide Area Network (EDnet) that serves the data communications needs of the education and culture organizations in Nova Scotia. The network is an information systems platform that supports administrative systems used by the department and others in the education and culture communities. In addition, EDnet provides Internet access to Nova Scotia Community College campuses, Collège de l'Acadie learning centres, public libraries, museums, and public schools.

Currently there are over 300 EDnet sites throughout Nova Scotia, each having 56K bps or higher speed access. All sites have multiple microcomputer-based workstations for Internet access or administrative computing, running on Local Area Networks (LANs). As many as 10,000 computers are now attached to Ednet. There are presently about 200 public schools (40 per cent of the province's schools) with high-speed connection to Ednet. As a result, more than 50 per cent of the public school students in Nova Scotia can now access the education resources of the Internet. The number of schools connecting to EDnet continues to increase.

Performance indicators. Nova Scotia has been working with other provinces and territories through the Canadian Education Statistics Council (CESC) and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) to develop education performance indicators at a national and international level. These indicators will be comparable across each province and territory and will allow the jurisdictions to report on the performance of their education systems and to identify factors that may influence that performance.

African Canadian Services Division. The Black Learners Advisory Committee (BLAC) Report on Education contained 46 recommendations to address the educational needs of the African Nova Scotian community. The following action has been taken in response to the report.

- The Department of Education and Culture established the African Canadian Services Division.
- Under the Incentive Fund Program, awards have been made to 159 high school students across the province.
- The African Nova Scotian Scholarships program has been implemented for university students with scholarships in education (11), medicine (1), and engineering (2)
- Seven Adult and Family Literacy programs are in operation, along with other adult literacy projects.
- 16 Supplementary Education programs, providing peer-tutoring services, are operating from various communities across the province.
- A review of the language arts curriculum (primary to grade six), to identify anti-racist content and the inclusion of African Canadian materials, is under way.
- A new African Heritage Literature course at the high school level is being developed.

Mi'kmaq Services Division. The Department of Education and Culture formed a task force with the mandate to make recommendations to the Minister of Education and Culture, to address the needs of Mi'kmaq students in public schools. In 1997, the task force became the Council on Mi'kmaq Education, and continues to provide guidance to the Minister on programs and services. The Mi'kmaq Services Division was established in 1997, and is responsible for providing leadership, direction, and planning required for the development and implementation of policies, procedures, programs, and services, to ensure that Mi'kmaq Nova Scotians benefit from a fully supportive learning environment in the public schools. Mi'kmaq Studies 10 course has been developed and will be implemented in September 1998. As well, grade 7 Mi'kmaq language curriculum for non-speakers is being developed.

Centre for Entrepreneurship Education and Development. The department has been actively involved in entrepreneurship education since 1993. At present over 25,000 students take part in entrepreneurship programs from p-12. The Centre for Entrepreneurship Education and Development was founded in 1995, in partnership with the Atlantic Canada Opportunity Agency (ACOA) and Nova Scotia Economic Development and Tourism, and has over 20 active programs in all areas of Nova Scotia. Its mission is to broaden and deepen the use of entrepreneurship education and to assist in the creation of an entrepreneurial culture in Nova Scotia. Programs are currently being undertaken in the following four cornerstone areas:

- entrepreneurship education programs
- professional development
- research and curriculum development

- community development

Special education policy. A special education policy document was released in April 1996. The policy was developed after extensive consultation with school boards, teachers, and advocacy groups. It is closely linked to the new *Education Act* and emphasizes a team approach to the development of individual program plans. The department and school boards are working collaboratively to implement the policy through ongoing inservice and professional development initiatives. An education framework for policy implementation is currently being developed.

Reading Recovery™. Reading Recovery™, developed in New Zealand, is an effective early literacy intervention program designed to reduce the number of children with reading and writing difficulties. It identifies at-risk children early and delivers a short-term teaching program. Since 1995, nine teacher leaders and 118 Reading Recovery™ teachers have been trained and over 1,000 children have received service. Student outcomes are tracked and the results in Nova Scotia are extremely positive.

Last year the department entered into an agreement to begin the first phase of a redevelopment of the program in the French language. Translation of the observation survey document has commenced and, in cooperation with Heritage Canada, a francophone teacher has been chosen to be trained in New Zealand as a trainer of teacher leaders.

Postsecondary education

University sector

Policy directions. In 1992, the Nova Scotia Council on Higher Education (NSCHE) was asked to take a leadership role in the rationalization of the Nova Scotia university system. At that time, university financing was expected to plateau or drop slightly. The key issues were maximizing return on investment through elimination of duplication, seizing new opportunities, and enhancing responsiveness and quality. Since that time, the fiscal situation has worsened, adding to the other challenges. The council continues to focus its attention on the public interest in higher education and to provide a direction for change and representation of this public interest.

Major areas of activity are:

- establishing a policy context for public financing of the university system
- catalyzing student-oriented policies and practices (e.g. credit transfer)
- recommending changes in structure, policy, and practice to improve efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and inter-institutional comparability
- promoting quality assurance and performance assessment
- promoting an international marketing initiative of the provincial university system

Policy documents have been released and action taken on a significant number of issues, including:

- implementation of credit transfer in the first and second years
- rationalization of the system of teacher education in the province
- agreement to merge Dalhousie University and the Technical University of Nova Scotia
- agreement to pursue a consortium among metro Halifax universities
- design of an international marketing initiative

Examples of some of these initiatives are outlined below.

Research, development, and innovation policy. Nova Scotia initiated a consultation in 1997 for the development of a comprehensive research, development, and innovation policy that focuses on the roles of the universities and the community college system in providing infrastructure and research. This policy review will form the basis of future government action and implementation.

University funding formula. In keeping with the NSCHE's mandate to establish a policy context for public financing, a proposed new funding formula for universities was presented to the Nova Scotia government in April 1998, and its recommendations are being incorporated into the budget process.

Credit transfer. In 1993, Nova Scotia universities adopted a policy of full transferability of first- and second-year courses within the Nova Scotia university system. Subsequently this agreement was extended to the Atlantic region in 1994-95. A national agreement was adopted by CMEC in September 1995. Currently all Nova Scotia institutions have agreed to the Nova Scotia and Atlantic credit transfer arrangements while all institutions with the exception of Dalhousie have signed the national protocol. Additional steps are being taken to promote mobility and to ensure that the learner is not required to repeat comparable learning experiences.

Restructuring of teacher education programs. In 1993, the NSCHE carried out a system-wide review of teacher education programs. As a result of government decisions from this review, a fundamental restructuring of the province's teacher education programs has been initiated that includes the Nova Scotia Teachers' College being phased out, Dalhousie and Saint Mary's Universities closing their programs, and Acadia, Mount Saint Vincent, St. Francis Xavier, and Université Sainte-Anne restructuring their programs. A system-wide coordinating council has been established .

Metro Halifax reform. Dalhousie University and the Technical University of Nova Scotia amalgamated in April 1997 in a bid to save administrative resources, strengthen academic linkages among the disciplines offered by the two institutions, and improve the critical mass in research and development. In addition to the merger, all institutions in metro Halifax have committed to the formation of a consortium that provides an integrated and cooperative means of sharing systems and services without compromising institutional culture and autonomy. The consortium also commits to joint academic and enrolment planning as well as enhanced student mobility among campuses.

College sector

Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC). The NSCC has completed two years under the direction of an independent Board of Governors, a self-governance initiative brought forward by the province with passage of the *Community Colleges Act* in 1996. The transfer of the NSCC to the new corporate governance model required the development of a full range of administrative, financial, and human resource services to support the institution.

The administrative and financial systems are nearing completion, and the collective bargaining process is under way with the unions selected by the employees to represent their interests in the college bargaining units. In addition to the major systems outlined above, the college has had to assume many of the functional responsibilities of operating a large, diverse institution that were previously provided by various government departments.

The NSCC's annual program renewal process has completed its fourth cycle. The process is designed to continually update the program offerings of the NSCC, to ensure that they are meeting the labour market needs of the province. Through this process, the NSCC has been able to introduce 62 new programs of study since 1994, that were not previously offered in Nova Scotia. The customized training activity of the college continues

to grow as additional service to train and retrain the existing workforce is provided. Programming in this area has grown from revenues of \$6.5 million in 1994-95 to \$9.9 million in 1997-98, with service to over 12,000 students.

Collège de l'Acadie. This college serves the francophone community in six learning centres in Nova Scotia and one in Prince Edward Island through an interprovincial agreement. A self-governing institution with a Board of Governors in place since April 1997, the college has maintained its position as leader in the practical application of interactive educational technologies, and currently offers 10 full-time programs, part-time courses, and customized training programs.

Apprenticeship

Refocusing Apprenticeship Project - alternate delivery and accreditation. In order to become certified journeypersons, apprentices must engage in between 450 and 800 hours of technical training combined with several years of on-the-job skills training. Traditionally, in each year of apprenticeship, apprentices have been required to leave their place of work for periods ranging from three to eight weeks to attend technical training sessions. For many employers and apprentices, this arrangement has become increasingly inconvenient. Employers lose the productivity of a valuable employee and apprentices must often incur expenses related to travelling to the training institution.

Refocusing Apprenticeship is a joint pilot project with the department, the NSCC, and Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), to explore the potential of a new approach to the delivery of apprenticeship training and the accreditation of training providers and employers. The goal of the project is to provide maximum access to apprenticeship training and reduce the financial burden to external funding agencies and to apprentices. The trades being piloted for this phase of Refocusing Apprenticeship are automotive service technician, cook, construction electrician, industrial electrician, and stationary engineer (power engineer) - 4th class. Apprenticeship training will be divided into courses structured around the tasks and the sub-tasks of the National Occupational Analyses Series, the standard for occupations in Canada.

Taking advantage of the most current communications technologies, Refocusing Apprenticeship has established a "virtual campus" that allows apprentices to access their technical training through a computer terminal. Classes will combine user-friendly, interactive distance education methods with part-time classroom instruction and self-study. The virtual campus means that apprentices will be able to access their technical training wherever a computer terminal is located. The campus address is <http://access.nsc.ns.ca>

Apprenticeship Information Management System (AIMS). In 1997, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick entered into a partnership to create a computerized Apprenticeship Information Management System through the adoption of new technology, to replace the current database system shared by the provinces. Manitoba has also expressed interest in participating in the partnership, at least for the initial phase. The goals of this project are to provide an environment and method for administering and tracking apprentices and journeypersons and incorporating other related processes that will result in benefits to the provinces and their clients. The prototype was unveiled April 30, 1998 with expectations that the new system will be fully operational by April 1, 1999. The specific goals of the project are to:

- allow easy transfer of information between the provinces
- provide better service to clients
- provide more cost-effective services
- eliminate overlap and duplication between the provinces
- produce regular and ad hoc management reports via a flexible, powerful, user-friendly report-generating tool

Interprovincial Computerized Examination Management System (ICEMS). As part of its commitment to the development and implementation of national standards in apprenticeship, Nova Scotia has entered into a partnership with HRDC and other provinces/territories to develop a comprehensive examination development and management system that will allow jurisdictions to coordinate their efforts and ease transitions for workforce mobility. Nova Scotia contributes financially to this project and provides resources on a continuing basis to ensure the project's success. 1998-99 is the third year of the four-year ICEMS agreement. A steering committee is in place for the ICEMS project and it has recently completed the selection of the ICEMS technical project leader.

Provincial Apprenticeship Board. In November 1994, a new 17-member Provincial Apprenticeship Board was appointed with responsibilities for advising the Minister of Education and Culture on all aspects of apprenticeship, including planning, training for today's labour market as well as future jobs, promoting the apprenticeship model of training to the private sector, and making recommendations to the minister for the designation of new occupations for apprenticeship.

In June 1997 the Provincial Apprenticeship Board was restructured to become an effective promotional tool for apprenticeship and a constructive linkage mechanism for industry. The board is now composed of three subcommittees: Linkages and Industry; Marketing and Communications; and Act and Governance. These three subcommittees act in unison to ensure that apprenticeship is seen as a viable and effective training process.

Other adult education initiatives

Community learning initiative (CLI). Created in 1994, the CLI provides funding, resources, and other supports to 27 community-based learning networks in the province for the delivery of literacy and upgrading programs. This program ensures that Nova Scotians have opportunities to obtain literacy instruction in their communities, and that stakeholders work in partnership to meet the needs of adult learners.

Workplace education program. This program supports the development of literacy and upgrading programs in the workplace and promotes a training culture that includes literacy as its foundation. The purpose of the program is to:

- provide financial and other assistance to implement new workplace literacy and upgrading programs
- promote an awareness of the need for ongoing workplace training
- provide local workplace teams with the training and infrastructure needed to sustain long-term workplace training

The Nova Scotia Partners and Workplace Education Committee, a provincial advisory committee comprising business, labour, and government representatives, steers the program.

Nova Scotia Links Program. Nova Scotia Links is a student internship program designed to provide structured pathways to the world of work. It incorporates structured student learning and an opportunity for students to gain valuable work experience in their chosen field of study. This joint federal-provincial initiative is designed to reduce the difficulty many young people experience in making the transition from their studies at a postsecondary institution to becoming active participants in the labour force in careers related to their training. The five-year program began in June 1995 and a total of 2,418 internships have been completed to date. Nova Scotia Links has special initiatives for Aboriginal and African Nova Scotian students. It features a declining wage subsidy over the life of the program.

Internet. For further information contact: <http://www.ednet.ns.ca>

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Elementary and secondary education

Accountability. Several steps have been taken to enhance accountability including:

- placing more emphasis on measurable results in annual reports
- developing a three-year business plan that clearly sets out the policies and direction the department intends to pursue
- participating in the development of regional performance indicators
- developing standards for programs and services
- participating in national and regional assessment programs
- increasing the effectiveness of provincial records management

Information technologies. The Prince Edward Island Department of Education has established a number of goals for information technology. These include:

- integrating information technology into programs and services to support curriculum, learning, community and cultural activities, and to enhance administrative efficiency and access to services
- developing partnerships with private business and other organizations
- emphasizing the training of teachers and administrators
- developing a vision document to guide implementation of information technology

Schools in the province have access to a high-speed network known as PEI Broadband Communications Network (PEIBCN). PEIBCN can carry data, audio, graphics, and video 5,500 times faster than current industry standards. It will provide all 28,000 students and teachers in Prince Edward Island with access to electronic mail, World Wide Web, and improved equipment. Additionally, PEIBCN will provide the environment for schools to share lessons, materials, and information with each other and schools off-Island, including the delivery of interactive multimedia curricula. The high speed network resulted from a partnership between the Province of Prince Edward Island, Island Tel Advanced Solutions, and two leading information and data communications companies, Newbridge Networks and Sun Microsystems.

The Department of Education has developed an on-line application process for student loans to increase access and convenience for students requiring financial assistance. The system has eliminated submission delays and provides increased accessibility to loan information.

Another initiative in the area of technology has been the development of the Department of Education Web site, LESTER or Links for Educators and Students to Educational Resources. A tribute to the popularity and value of the Web site was the recognition of LESTER as Canada's Reader's Choice Award for the Web site of the week by Yahoo! Canada, a multinational categorizing service that provides a subject index of sites available on the Internet.

Successful use of technology requires a trained teaching staff. To this end, the Department of Education is committed to the professional development of teachers in the area of technology. Some examples of recent training sessions include the integration of the Internet into lesson plans, familiarization with new software, multimedia programs and the Internet, and the use of computer technology in the classroom. The Technology Centre of the Department of Education also conducted a Summer Institute.

Program reform. The department is addressing curriculum concerns by:

- participating in regional and pan-Canadian projects
- developing and implementing outcomes-based curricula
- initiating new ways of providing teachers with in-service training
- coordinating grade-level program initiatives

The department is continually involved in the development and implementation of new programs, many of which are the result of regional cooperation through the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation. The implementation of a new primary language arts program continues, with its focus on integrating information technology and information processes into the language arts program. The implementation process involves a mentoring project, in-service sessions, as well as after-school sessions on a variety of topics including portfolio assessment and response to reading.

A new language arts program for grade 4 students was instituted in Prince Edward Island schools this year. After a pilot phase, *Collections* (Prentice Hall) was selected due to its superior support materials. Teachers will receive four themes, each of which contains mini-anthologies and six novel sets or with one theme, a set of biographies. *Collections* is also being implemented in grade 5 late in this school year and in 1998-99. The department plans to pilot the program in grade 6 in 1998-99.

A new course specifically designed for Island students was introduced in the current school year. The aim of Agriscience (801A) is to revitalize an interest in agricultural programs since agriculture is part of the foundation upon which the Island economy is built. Students explore a wide range of topics including environmental technology, biotechnology, pest management, interior and exterior plant landscaping, food science, and agribusiness. Agriscience also promotes lifelong learning since many of the skills, like landscaping, will be useful throughout the students' lives.

English is the second language for most students who attend school in the French School Board. Teachers and consultants developed and are implementing an English second-language program that corresponds to the unique needs of the students. English is introduced at the grade 4 level and continues through to grade 12. During the 1997-98 school year, elementary themes were finalized as well as the program course of studies and related documents. The English program for the secondary level of French first-language education is currently under revision.

Funding. The budget for the 1997-98 school year confirmed the provincial government's promise that education is a priority. The Department of Education continued its commitment to provide teachers and students with high quality teaching and learning resources. A number of new school construction and renovation programs were announced.

Partnerships. The National Literacy Secretariat, in partnership with the Department of Education's Adult Learning and Literacy Section, offers funding for literacy projects. Federal literacy project funding is provided to defray the costs to support literacy project development in Prince Edward Island for non-profit organizations and non-governmental institutions.

The Innovators in the Schools program aims to assist teachers with classroom speakers, hands-on demonstrations, science/computer club advisors, science fair judges, and more. Innovators originate from a wide range of science and technical fields, and include astronomers, biologists, chemists, doctors, engineers, food scientists, and geologists. During the 1996-97 school year, over 200 requests were filled, reaching 7,800 Island students.

In the summer of 1997, the PEI Science and Technology Awareness Site (STAS) was established with the support of the Knowledge Economy Partnership, the Department of Education, and the University of Prince Edward Island. The site is dedicated to increasing public awareness about science and technology-related programs currently under way on Prince Edward Island. STAS has three major divisions: the PEI Science Fair, Science and Technology in Island Industry, and Science Awareness in the Community.

Internet. Further information can be obtained at: <http://www.gov.pe.ca/educ/index.html>

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Since 1949, when the colony of Newfoundland joined the Canadian Confederation, education has been a high priority of government. During the half-century since Confederation, Government has made extensive investments to create and maintain a world-class system of public education.

The mission of the Department of Education is to provide affordable, high quality education to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians so that they are able to acquire, through lifelong learning, the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for personal growth and the development of society. To fulfill this mission, the department has undertaken a number of significant initiatives intended to improve the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of education in the province.

Elementary and secondary education

The Newfoundland school system operates within a K-12 structure. The department is responsible for designing and implementing policies, strategies, programs, and services in the areas of school curricula, student program and system evaluation, professional development, student support services, research and indicators, and strategic planning. All matters pertaining to the day-to-day operations of schools are administered by school district offices accountable to locally-elected school boards.

Accountability. Key initiatives in this area include the following.

School and district strategic planning. School planning and assessment provide a means for schools to measure their performance against a set of standards that are set provincially and applied locally. The department fosters a system whereby school planning, district planning, and departmental planning interact to encourage continuous growth.

School report cards. One of the goals of the Department of Education Indicators Program is to facilitate the production of school indicator reports (report cards) to provide parents and other interested parties with meaningful information about student performance and the effectiveness of schools in supporting student learning. The basis for the local report cards is the School Profile System, a user-friendly software package developed by the Department of Education, that can access

specific departmental databases to generate a profile of any school in the province. The information contained in the system includes data collected through student registrations and provincial testing and certification programs, as well as data from student activities and student attitude surveys.

New legislation on education reform states that all schools are required to prepare an annual report that will be available to parents and the public. The school report provides a mechanism for schools to comply with this new requirement. While school report cards are written primarily for parents, the preparation process is the vehicle through which each school principal and staff, along with parents, can identify a school's strengths and challenges and formulate plans for school improvement.

School councils. School councils have been established for the purpose of enhancing the quality of school programs and improving levels of student achievement. School councils are part of a worldwide trend to involve parents and the community more directly in schools, and are a reflection of this province's emphasis on achieving improvement in education through local collaboration. *The Schools Act, 1997* states that all schools in the province must establish a school council made up of parents, teachers, students, other community members, and the school principal.

Restructuring. The 1992 Royal Inquiry into the Delivery of Programs and Services in Primary/Elementary/Secondary Education recommended a number of reform initiatives in Newfoundland's school system. Following five years of debate, education in Newfoundland and Labrador changed significantly subsequent to a second provincial referendum, and Term 17 was signed into law in January 1998. This constitutional change paved the way for a restructured education system and for school board elections based on geographic representation (instead of religion) in the 11 new school districts. The government's goal in establishing this new system is to improve the entire education system and make it more accountable to clients and taxpayers with respect to both student performance and education expenditures. Some of the most significant reforms include:

- school system restructuring and governance
- the establishment of a provincial francophone school board in June 1997
- major curriculum changes
- the establishment of school councils

- a major review of the services for special needs students
- increased accountability for student learning

Program reform. The department has placed a major emphasis on introducing new programs and courses that focus on the following initiatives:

- developing common curriculum and assessment instruments in some subject areas at the K-12 level with the other Atlantic provinces
- a new senior high school program
- reporting to parents, postsecondary students, and other stakeholders on the performance of the K-12 and postsecondary sectors, through provincial indicator reports and school report cards
- a newly established set of goals and objectives for education that are tied to performance measures, with targets for each year up to 2002
- continual emphasis on maintaining and improving computer and Internet access for all K-12 schools through the province's Stem~Net project and other initiatives

Information technology. In the K-12 system, information and communication technology is addressed from two perspectives, technology integration and technology education. Technology integration focuses on computers, networks, and the Internet as tools to enable and enhance a broader range of learning experiences. Students use these tools to become proficient in acquiring and evaluating information and in developing and disseminating it across all disciplines. Technology education is a broad-based program of study focusing on the application of information and communications technology. High school courses focus on such areas as communications, programming and control, biotechnology, and the basic principles of product design. Technology education courses build skills and develop problem-solving abilities.

The STEM~Net Project has created an Internet-based communications network for teachers. It has expanded, in partnership with the cable television industry, to include student projects through Stellar Schools and, in partnership with School Net, through projects such as GrassRoots. Many schools are equipped with computer and technology laboratories and are moving to set up whole school networks. All schools have Internet access.

Partnerships. In partnership with the provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador has identified common

Essential Graduation Learnings for all high school graduates in Atlantic Canada. The *Essential Graduation Learnings* sets out, in a clear and concise way, what students should know, be able to do, and value upon completion of high school. Attainment of these graduation learnings provide for the development of well-rounded students in aesthetic expression, citizenship, communication, personal development, problem-solving, technical competence, and spiritual and moral development.

The four Atlantic Provinces are also working jointly to develop common secondary courses in English, mathematics, science, français, mathématiques, and sciences. It is intended that once these common courses are introduced in schools, common assessments would be administered to students in all four provinces. These activities represent important achievements in terms of regional cooperation and are intended to maintain high standards and accountability in secondary education.

Transition to postsecondary education. Student success in the secondary system is demonstrated by an increase in the proportion of students completing graduation requirements. Graduation rates from secondary school have risen steadily from 68.3 per cent in 1992 to 82.2 per cent in 1996, an overall increase of more than 20 per cent over the five-year period.

Following high school graduation in June 1995, 45 per cent of graduates attended university either inside or outside the province. About 10 per cent of graduates reported that they were pursuing courses in publicly-funded community colleges while about 9 per cent were attending private colleges. A second follow-up in 1997 indicated that the total percentage of 1995 graduates who had gone on to some form of postsecondary education or training was over 80 per cent.

Postsecondary education and training

The postsecondary education system in Newfoundland is composed of Memorial University, the College of the North Atlantic, and a number of private training institutions (private colleges). Initiatives have been taken to adapt to the ever-changing postsecondary system, and to develop a system that responds quickly to the dynamics of the workplace and in the economy. Within the Department of Education all matters related to postsecondary education fall within the Advanced Studies Branch.

Accountability. The *Postsecondary Indicators '98* report is a demonstration of the department's commitment to openness and public accountability in education. The report is an objective assessment of the state of postsecondary education in the province. Overall the findings are positive. The report also points out concerns or areas that may require attention, correction, additional monitoring or policy revision.

Restructuring. In the postsecondary sector, the public college system has been restructured, creating a single provincial college, the College of the North Atlantic, from five regional colleges. On January 1, 1997, the government established the new entity with headquarters in Stephenville. This consolidation was aimed at improving college efficiencies by creating a central student registration system, consolidating financial and administrative services, and reviewing the type and scope of programs along with preparing a provincial training plan. The final step in the change process involves the implementation of a comprehensive three- to five-year Strategic Education Plan. The department continues to focus on:

- improving student achievement
- increasing access for all students
- making education more relevant to the needs of students, and the demands of the labour market
- finding the most cost efficient ways to offer high quality programs and services

Information technology. One of the more recent applications of information technology in the postsecondary sector has been in the area of access to student aid through the department's new Student Aid Web site. Using the Web site, students can apply for a student loan and receive an immediate needs assessment, inquire about the status of their loan or application, and browse for general information on the Student Aid program. Approximately 5,000 requests were made to the Web site in January alone.

Program reform. The following are major initiatives in this area:

Accreditation and articulation. There have been improvements to the quality of services provided to postsecondary students, including program transfer arrangements, progressive certification, and assessment of prior learning experiences.

Curriculum and training standards review. The department continues to review postsecondary curriculum and training in efforts to ensure that programs in Newfoundland and Labrador meet national standard criteria. The review includes comparisons between this province's standards and those in Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia.

Student aid. Under the Student Loan Remission Program, postsecondary graduates whose combined federal and provincial loans exceed established debt limits are remitted the difference between their actual borrowing and the established debt limit by the province. In the 1998-99 budget, the province also established more than 4,000 awards to postsecondary students, each valued at \$1000, based on financial need and academic achievement. These awards will be issued until the year 2000 when similar awards under the new Government of Canada Millennium scholarships become available.

Apprenticeship training. The new *Apprenticeship and Certification Act* grants authority to the Provincial Apprenticeship and Certification Board to accredit apprenticeship training programs. The primary objective of accreditation is to identify those apprenticeship programs that meet the Provincial Apprenticeship and Certification Board's minimum standards to produce graduates who can function at the required level of competence. By providing an auditing mechanism that is independent of the education system, accreditation assures the educational community and the public that a program has clearly defined and appropriate objectives and is meeting them. Further, it ensures that the program reflects current technical practices, up-to-date training facilities, and educational methodologies.

Partnerships. The Council on Higher Education was established in August 1992 as a joint initiative between the department of Education, the former five public Colleges of Applied Arts, Technology and Continuing Education (now College of the North Atlantic), and Memorial University. The council maintains several committees and working groups, including the Articulation Committee, Transfer and Admissions Committee, and the Prior Learning Assessment Committee.

Transition to the workplace. There is a special focus on the transition of graduates from high school, college, and university through the implementation of ongoing high school and postsecondary graduate follow-up surveys. There are also annual labour market sector studies, most recently in the mining and marine sectors.

The postsecondary graduate follow-up study showed that, 16 months after graduation, most of the 1995 graduates of postsecondary programs had obtained full-time or part-time work, either related or unrelated to their area of study. Graduates of university Master's and diploma programs and public college three-year programs were more likely to have full-time jobs related to their area of study than graduates from other postsecondary programs.

System-wide initiatives

The following initiatives cut across the whole system and into the transition from education to work.

Accountability. Two initiatives are set out below.

Indicators program. The department of Education indicators program is a comprehensive system of measurements and comparisons taken at regular intervals to help assess and improve the performance of the education system. These measurements cover a large number of areas, such as student participation and achievement, school and postsecondary system performance, as well as the attitudes and values of learners and the public toward education. These data are compared to such reference points as past measurements, results from other jurisdictions, or other agreed-upon standards of measurement. The resulting information allows educators to objectively assess how well schools and institutions are doing, and which areas need improvement.

The indicators program also serves to inform the public. The information published allows the public to judge whether the education system is doing what it is supposed to do. In other words, it holds the education system accountable for performance and expenditures. The Department of Education publishes a public accountability report on the K-12 and postsecondary systems on a yearly rotational basis. The *Profile* series of documents reports on the K-12 sector while the *Postsecondary Indicators* series covers higher education.

Annual report. A key supporting mechanism for departmental operations is its accountability framework that is designed not only to evaluate and report on departmental processes and outcomes for the purpose of continuous improvement, but also to incorporate key measures for the education system. The performance assessment system of the Department of Education affords it the ability to track and publicly report progress in achieving its education goals and objectives. The regular public reporting of results is integral to accountability, and reporting is a key component of the Strategic Education Plan. The annual report focuses on what has been accomplished and at what costs, conveys graphical information, and includes explanatory analysis. The contents of the annual report are grounded in the department's plan and its performance measures.

Strategic planning. In 1997, the department developed a Strategic Education Plan that extends to the year 2000 and beyond. The plan identifies issues and strategies that cover all areas of the education system, as well as plans to address the communications, financial, and human resources aspects within the department.

Summit 2000 conference. This major education conference will bring together representatives of government, educational institutions, business, and industry, and will include educators, academics, administrators, students, parents, and others interested in education at all levels. Those who will not be able to attend in person will be able to participate directly on-line via the Internet. The beginning of the next millennium will provide an opportunity to examine and assess where we are, how we are doing, and where we are going. This conference will provide an opportunity to hear from educators elsewhere and compare educational initiatives in Newfoundland and Labrador with those in other parts of the world. The conference will also showcase our schools, postsecondary institutions, and businesses connected with education, and provide a forum for educators and business and community leaders to learn from each other.

Information technology. The geography and economy of Newfoundland and Labrador have encouraged innovation in the provision of services and programs via distance education. In order to provide a broad selection of courses to secondary students, regardless of where they live, the Department of Education developed a Distance Education Project, in partnership with the Telemedicine Centre of Memorial University of Newfoundland and school boards. This project has enabled students in small schools around the province to have access to courses in advanced mathematics, French, physics, and chemistry. There is also international use of distance education in medical research and medical education programs.

As new technologies emerge in distance education, the Department of Education is providing new systems including the use of CD-ROM, Internet access, and enhanced telewriters. As well, the Department of Education is experimenting with ways and means to provide high speed telecommunications access to courses and to offer

Internet-based distance education courses to students. This project is making an important contribution to equity of educational opportunity.

Funding. Newfoundland spends a significant part of its annual budget on education. Since 1990-91, the education sector has received about one quarter of total government expenditures. Of the total current account funding spent in 1997-98, 74 per cent was spent on the K-12 education system, 24 per cent on the postsecondary system, with the remaining 2 per cent on literacy, library, executive, and support services. The department is projecting that the number of students in the K-12 system will continue to decline significantly while the need for improved educational levels among our adult population will increase.

Internet. For more information, please visit our Internet site at www.gov.nf.ca/edu

THE YUKON

The Yukon Territory covers 483,450 square kilometers (207,000 square miles) — an area only slightly smaller than that of the four Atlantic provinces combined. Despite its size, Yukon's population is only 32,000 people. Yukon's Aboriginal peoples, 14 distinct First Nations speaking seven different languages, comprise one-quarter of this population.

The Department of Education has direct responsibility for most aspects of school operations. *The Education Act* allows for local control to be exercised through school boards, school councils, and school committees. School boards have almost all the powers of the department, one exception being the power to tax. School councils are less powerful than school boards but do have the authority to establish policies and procedures in certain areas and recommend how the discretionary portion of the school budget should be allocated. School committees are purely advisory bodies. Currently only one school has a school board, one has a school committee, and 26 others have school councils.

The curriculum established by the British Columbia Ministry of Education forms 80 per cent of the curriculum taught in Yukon schools. The remaining 20 per cent is locally developed.

The Yukon Department of Education is pursuing the following initiatives to meet the challenges facing education in the territory:

- involving the greater education community in supporting postsecondary education and training to deliver effective training programs such as Youth Work, Entrepreneurship, and Jobs
- ensuring that the requirements of the *Education Act* and land claim agreements with respect to the cultural and linguistic heritage of First Nations are met
- supporting new and innovative education programs for people of all ages, including comprehensive counselling, early intervention, reading recovery, literacy initiatives, distance education, and Internet access
- working diligently on keeping schools violence-free and safe for everyone through initiatives such as the Together Towards Safer School Action Plan; policies on emergency planning, access to information, harassment, student records, and gender equity; guidelines for the teaching of controversial issues
- developing meaningful partnerships with First Nations, parents, students, educators, industry and labour organizations
- assisting with school board governance, recognizing the role and interests of the elected representatives on school councils and their involvement in decision-making processes, including the planning of renovations and new facilities

Elementary and secondary education

Early intervention project. The project was designed to attempt to identify and meet the needs of at-risk students before they become candidates for learning assistance teaching. It should be noted that at-risk does not include special education students on IEPs (Individual Educational Plans). Four areas are addressed: family, community, classroom, and teacher support. The project has focussed on the following activities:

Community Books for Babies — A literacy promotion through which a free book is presented to parents of all Yukon newborns.

Family PALS (Parental Action for Literacy Support) — A block of five sessions is offered to the parents of year 1 and Kindergarten students on home support strategies for at-risk children. Both urban and rural schools participate.

Teacher Reading RecoveryTM — Sixty teachers have taken three two-day sessions to prepare themselves for the implementation of Reading Recovery. Twenty more will be trained next year. The focus of the sessions is information on Reading RecoveryTM, in-depth assessment training, and the development of a balanced literacy program.

Classroom Wiggleworks — An interactive CD-ROM program, that has been introduced to all year 1 teachers and learning assistants as a specific support to at-risk readers.

Roving Teacher Pilot Project — Direct support is provided to the majority of classrooms in urban schools for half an hour a day, four mornings a week, from October to March, so that the classroom teacher is able to work with four at-risk students.

There is ongoing expansion of the Early Intervention Project so that components will be available on a territory-wide basis by the year 2000.

Task force to promote safe schools. The task force was formed to review the territory-wide *Talking About Crime* report and to provide recommendations for action. Representatives from other government departments and agencies met to share concerns about violence in schools and to recommend initiatives for change. A report from the task force was published in May 1996, with recommendations that will bridge the gap between the community goals in *Talking About Crime* and specific programs and procedures in schools. A Safe Schools Coordinator has been hired on a half-time basis.

Keeping schools safe policy package. A Keeping Schools Safe Policy Package has been developed to support schools in their school-based initiatives. The package includes policies in the following areas: harassment, bus rules, school plans, gender equity, and discipline. A list of Safe School initiatives is being collected from every school in the territory to be compiled and shared. A child abuse awareness and violence prevention program is being implemented in most Yukon schools.

Assessment Action Plan. The Department of Education Assessment Action Plan was developed in response to the comprehensive report to the Education Review Committee presented to the Yukon Legislature in December 1994. The key purposes to be served by the assessment of student learning against curriculum-based standards are:

- to provide parents and the public with an objective and credible basis to assess student progress across Yukon
- to assist in fulfilling the departmental obligation for public accountability
- to enhance public respect and support for Yukon public schools
- to improve the quality of instruction in Yukon public schools
- to ensure that all students in Yukon public schools are provided instruction consistent with meeting the expectations of the mandated curriculum

The following initiatives have been launched, with full implementation scheduled for 1998-99.

- The Department of Education has established a Departmental Assessment Committee.
- The Department of Education has a Student Information Assessment Unit.
- Yukon Territorial examinations are being implemented in grades 9 and 11 in the areas of mathematics and reading/writing, with examinations to count for 25 per cent of the student's final school mark.

- The Canadian Tests of Basic Skills are compulsory in grades 4-7.
- Yukon students will participate in SAIP Science II through the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada.

Yukon Entrepreneurship Centre. This initiative has been developed in partnership with Human Resources Development Canada, the Department of Education, and the business community. In September 1998, the program will be expanded to schools with youth and adults aged 19-29 able to learn all aspects of business planning and implementation. Students under the age of 19 will receive guidance on an individual basis.

The Yukon Excellence Awards. For the 1998-99 school year, Yukon Excellence Awards (ranging from \$100 per subject in grade 8 to \$400 per subject in grade 11) are available for mathematics and English in grades 8-11. Yukon Excellence Awards (\$500 per subject) are also available at the grade 12 level for the 14 subjects on the British Columbia provincial examinations. Excellence is defined as achieving 80 per cent or greater on a grade 8-11 Yukon Territorial examination or on a grade 12 British Columbia provincial examination.

Yukon First Nations curriculum resources. The following initiatives are intended to promote understanding of Yukon First Nations and their changing role in contemporary society.

Dene Games/Arctic Sports Curriculum Guide. This curriculum resource guide and resource kit is available for grades 6 -11 physical education in Yukon schools. There is teacher support available from the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre Recreation Program and Sport Yukon.

B.C. First Nations Studies 12 Integrated Resource Package (I.R.P.) The course focuses on the study of the Yukon Land Claim and Self-Government Agreements.

Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education: Aboriginal Language and Culture Project. This generic framework for Aboriginal languages from K-12 provides culturally appropriate Aboriginal language activities encompassing a high degree of community and elder involvement. Two Yukon schools will be piloting this curriculum in the 1998-99 school year.

Yukon Education Student Network (YES net). YES net is a network established by the Department of Education for the exclusive use of students and teachers. It provides the following services to students and professional staff :

- internet access to all Yukon schools
- on-line access for ordering teacher resources and professional materials
- an avenue to develop and maintain Web-based curriculum projects
- e-mail services to all professional staff

Postsecondary education and training

Canada-Yukon Labour Market Development Agreement. Canada and Yukon signed the Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) in 1998. Under the LMDA, the two will play equal roles in the design of and decision-making on active employment measures and services provided for in the *Employment Insurance Act*. The LMDA is intended to ensure that the design of these programs will reflect the needs, circumstances, and priorities in Yukon. During the initial five years of the agreement, at least \$16 million will be available to help unemployed Yukon people return to work.

Yukon training strategy. Yukon is working with First Nations, communities, labour, the private sector, youth, women's organizations, and non-profit organizations to develop an updated training strategy. This strategy will prepare Yukon people to take advantage of employment and economic opportunities, particularly as they relate to the implementation of land claims and devolution in the territory. The strategy will focus particularly on youth, low income earners, social assistance recipients, and creation of a more representative government workforce.

Training trust funds. The Yukon Government is establishing sector-focussed training trust funds. These funds will provide employer-employee committees and other groups with secure long-term funding to meet the specific training needs of their industry or community. Training trust funds have been established since 1995 for a number of sectors, including mining, forestry, tourism, and agriculture.

Association for Community Youth initiatives. A board comprising both youth and adults has been established to administer a training trust fund of \$200,000 for youth. Projects that meet the needs identified by the board and that are proposed by youth oriented groups, student councils, service clubs, and First Nations will be considered for funding.

Yukon Native Teacher Education Program (YNTEP). YNTEP is a four-year Bachelor's degree program offered at Yukon College to train First Nations people to be educators. Since 1993, of the 27 students who have graduated from the program, 18 have been hired for teaching positions in Yukon and five are teaching in the provinces. Advanced Education is discussing a new five-year agreement for YNTEP with Yukon College and the University of Regina.

Apprenticeship program. Yukon has a small private sector with a limited number of qualified journeypersons to train apprentices. The government employs a large number of qualified journeypersons and has a variety of facilities in its operations where apprentices can gain experience. The program aims to utilize these resources to create local training and employment opportunities, be a responsible employer, set an example for the training of apprentices, and target equity group members in areas where they traditionally have very low participation.

There are no permanent occupants of these positions, which are available only for apprentices during their training period. When apprentices complete their training, they are moved out of the position. They can then compete for regular positions when they become available, find employment in the private sector, or establish their own businesses. Currently, all positions are filled in five communities, with a significant number filled from equity groups.

Secondary School Apprenticeship Program. The Yukon Secondary School Apprenticeship Program (YSSAP) offers all secondary students in grade 11 or 12 an opportunity to attend high school and train as an apprentice at the same time. The YSSAP began in 1994-95 and is expanding to rural communities. Students divide their time between academics in school and trades training in a workplace. Through YSSAP, students gain high school graduation credits and time credit toward their apprenticeship while earning a wage. Students complete all compulsory credits required for high school graduation.

Student Training and Employment (S.T.E.P.). This program provides funding for career-related employment to Yukon postsecondary students in undergraduate studies. Eligible jobs must relate to a field of study, demonstrate career-related training, and benefit the student's future employability. A wage subsidy of \$5.75 per hour for 37.5 hours per week, to a maximum of 12 weeks, is available to eligible employers. Jobs must also provide a minimum of 37.5 hours of work per week for a minimum of 12 consecutive weeks with appropriate supervision, pay a minimum of \$11.50 per hour, and start no earlier than mid-May and end by early September.

Canada/Yukon Summer Career Placement Program. This jointly-funded and administered Canada/Yukon program is designed to provide assistance to students through the provision of a wage subsidy to employers. Employment must be between May 1 and September 1 and last a minimum of six weeks to a maximum of eighteen weeks. Further employment must be full-time (30-40 hours per week) or part-time for positions employing disabled persons. Students and youth must be paid a minimum of \$7.06 per hour.

Shad Valley. The Advanced Education Branch selects and sponsors two students per year to participate in the Shad Valley program for outstanding students in grades 11 and 12. The program provides the opportunity for exceptionally talented students from across Canada to spend four weeks at one of eight universities, learning new concepts in computing, engineering, technology, entrepreneurship, and mathematics. The program offers students a chance to learn about the disciplines that will give them the edge in the competitive, knowledge-based world of tomorrow. This program includes an academic term during the month of July, that is spent at workshops, lectures, and group projects at a Canadian university. The branch then locates a five-week paid work term in the field of study that the student is interested in pursuing.

Youth Exploring Trades (Y.E.T.). The Y.E.T. program is a summer day camp for girls and boys between the ages of 11 and 14. This program evolved from Girls Exploring Trades Program pilot project in 1994. It was expanded to include both boys and girls and is designed to offer a fun opportunity for youth, ages 12-15, to explore the trades while building a soap-box racer (go cart).

Computer Camp. This summer day camp for students between the ages of 9 and 15, promotes education and learning by combining instruction in computer use with an extensive recreational program. It is held in Whitehorse and five other communities in the Yukon.

Internet. Further information can be obtained at <http://www.yukonweb.wis.net/government>

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

The Northwest Territories (NWT) makes up 34 per cent of Canada yet contains 0.23 per cent of its population (64,000). Sixty-five per cent of the population is Aboriginal and the birth rate of the NWT is almost twice the national average. The government is involved in the important work of creating of two territories from what is now the NWT. As of April 1, 1999, the NWT will become Nunavut and the yet to be named Western Territory.

As a relatively young educational system, the NWT continues to develop and expand its programs and services to students in K-12 across the NWT. K-12 programs are now delivered in most communities. All large regional student residences have been phased out. In many educational jurisdictions in the NWT, students in the early years of school can be offered instruction in their Aboriginal language with instruction in English in the later grades. Culture-based curricula, Dene Kede and Inuuqatigiit, provide the foundations for learning in NWT schools, while Western Canadian Protocol (WCP) curricula as well as NWT curricula provide guidelines for instruction in a variety of subjects. NWT students write the Alberta grade 12 diploma exams and are involved in the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada's School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP).

Elementary and secondary education

Transitions. Transition programs focus particularly on easing the passage from school to career, and from early childhood programs to elementary programs. Educators in schools work closely with educators in Community Learning Centres to provide orientations to life at college and work.

School to career. Steps are being taken to promote career awareness from K-12 in a variety of creative ways including the use of interactive programs. Students prepare career and program plans that are considered a practical and supportive vehicle for preparing students to make informed choices about course selection, work experience, and career education. As a result, students are more aware of the options available to them as they prepare for and engage in the world of work, and gain greater insight into their own skills and potential.

Recognizing the developmental continuum from preschool to school, early childhood programs are a major focus for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. An Early Childhood Intervention Program, offered by Aurora College in the Western NWT, has been developed to standardize professional certification of caregivers. A second certificate, the Child and Family Support and Development Certificate, involving studies in family dynamics and community wellness, has been added to the certification program.

Accountability. Parents in NWT communities want to know that the education their children are receiving will serve them not only in northern communities, but anywhere in Canada. NWT communities want the education system to reflect the distinctiveness of the North and meet national academic standards. To that end, assessment programs are being undertaken and resources produced to enable citizens to gain a clear understanding of student achievement in both first and second languages.

During the past five years, comprehensive system reviews have been undertaken in all Divisional Education Councils (DECs). The department is presently developing an accountability framework that will require all educational jurisdictions to file annual reports detailing results and outcomes.

The NWT participates in the SAIP program and testing in reading and writing took place this spring.

The Classroom Assessment Materials Program (CAMP) is being piloted in two subject areas at two grade levels in seven communities. Students express an appreciation for the transparency of clearly defined performance

levels in this assessment process. A number of DEC's are already making plans for broad implementation of the CAMP within their jurisdictions.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment recently released *Towards Excellence: A Report on Education in the NWT*, that provides indicators of our success as an education system. In addition, the department is developing a position paper on assessment and evaluation as it applies within the complex cross-cultural world of the NWT.

Restructuring. This is a time of great change in the NWT. Preparations for the creation of two new territories occupy work schedules and imaginations. This is an evolving vision for self-determination and involves a great deal of restructuring and building of new government structures. The Department of Education in Nunavut will soon develop a unique new education system that is based on the dreams and aspirations of the citizens of Nunavut, of which 85 per cent are Inuit.

The Western NWT is busy restructuring the department to address the complex political, cultural, and linguistic nature of the Western Arctic. Community empowerment initiatives are resulting in the devolution of authority to the community level and a variety of self-government initiatives are under way.

The new *Education Act* that came into force in July 1996 provides for the development of alternate governance structures within educational jurisdictions.

Information technologies. The vast distances that separate NWT communities from each other and the rest of Canada present the need for creative and enthusiastic use of information technologies. Some of the innovations in this area include the development of a frame relay Digital Communication Network to provide a link between all NWT schools, colleges, libraries, and community learning centres and the Internet by the last quarter of 1998. The department is in the process of adopting a curriculum framework for information technology from K-12.

Educational programming. The education system of the NWT is based on the belief that every child has a right to be provided with culturally-appropriate programming within his or her home community with age-appropriate peers. Funding to develop culture-based resources has been increased to recognize the importance of language and culture in reflecting the experiences of students. Some of the innovations that have an impact on the area of programming include:

- community- and campus-based teacher education program to train Aboriginal teachers
- a strategy to support the implementation of culture-based education
- a focus on healthy schools and student well-being
- the ongoing implementation of inclusive education policies that provide programs to meet the needs of students at all levels in the education system
- the development of programming alternatives at the high school level to ensure that all students can experience success at the secondary level
- the provision of annual in-service sessions and supported implementation of a variety of curricular initiatives, including NWT and WCP documents
- training of school-community counsellors to support students in schools

Funding. Funding for education remains stable. The reality of increasing enrolments creates a need for resourcefulness. Recent allocations of funding for program implementation, inclusive education, and Aboriginal language programs enable schools to provide a greater variety of opportunities to students.

Partnerships. New partnerships have been created to work toward the achievement of education goals, thus maximizing existing resources while involving stakeholders and increasing local control of programs. New partnerships with Health and Welfare Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories Department of Health and Social Services have led to a variety of initiatives in the area of early childhood education.

Partnerships between schools and the business and mining communities are resulting in increased student exposure to the world of work. Field trips, mentorships, and invitations of business and mining personnel to the classroom result in a creative dialogue that helps students understand the realities of the working world in the NWT.

Partnerships between schools and colleges assist students to make a better transition between school and college. These relationships are currently allowing students to take college courses concurrently with other programs. More college classrooms and community learning centres are located in schools, fostering a much closer relationship between high school teachers and college instructors.

Postsecondary education

Significant progress has been made in the development and delivery of postsecondary education programs and services in the NWT over the past 30 years. A public college system has been implemented to deliver programs that are accessible to northerners, often right in their home community. It is now possible for northerners to access programs that range from literacy to certificate, diploma, and degree programs. In addition, transfer arrangements have been negotiated between various southern universities and the northern colleges so students can complete degrees either fully or partially in the North.

Adult basic education. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment is revising the Adult Basic Education curriculum for the Northwest Territories in 1998, based on a review that assessed the need for adult basic education and areas for improvement. The intent of the project is to standardize the curriculum across the Northwest Territories to ensure that students make a smooth transition from adult basic education programs to postsecondary education, employment, or training programs. The curriculum focuses on learner outcomes and is concentrating initially on English, then mathematics and social studies.

Student support. In 1997, the department conducted a review of the Student Financial Assistance Program to get broad public input into making the program more efficient and effective and to ensure viability without jeopardizing access by students to postsecondary education opportunities. Recommended changes for 1998 focus on administrative efficiencies for the program.

Career development. To improve access to a full range of career services throughout the NWT, a memorandum of agreement has been signed with Aurora College, through which local adult educators devote 10 per cent of their time to career development activities for both the community and students. Core libraries have been established in all learning centres to support this activity. Additionally, the public colleges have developed a certificate program for practitioners to increase skill levels and ensure northerners have access to quality services. Core courses have been accepted for transfer to Athabasca University's certificate program in career development.

The development of a policy to govern the implementation of career development from K-adulthood is under way. The policy will be supplemented by development of delivery standards, northern curricula, an evaluation framework, and staff training modules.

A territorial network for disseminating career development, education, and labour market information has been developed. This system will improve access to resources required to make meaningful choices.

Student success strategy. A strategy has been developed to assist students in making successful transitions to school and on to work. The strategy focuses on three streams, Getting In, Staying In, and Getting Out, with initiatives developed to address these areas. Of particular interest is the establishment of Student Success Centres on each of the three western campuses. The centres will house a variety of professionals who will provide students with academic, career development, and personal support.

Prior learning assessment. The public colleges and the department are working collaboratively to establish a system of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) within the postsecondary and adult career and employment realms. Currently, there has been little work done nationally that examines specific issues of PLAR and Aboriginal learners, and outcomes of this initiative could prove valuable as a model for other jurisdictions.

Community development. The NWT government is committed to integrating services at the community level. Several models have been developed to facilitate this process and concerted efforts are required to create a common process for implementation. Government of NWT (GNWT) departments will be hosting two conferences this year to establish that process with stakeholders and provide content-specific training as required.

Agenda for children and youth. GNWT Social Envelope departments are working collaboratively to develop a territorial Agenda for Children and Youth. The agenda will consider the “whole child” and address issues related to health, education, employment, justice, and social welfare. The document will set the stage for upcoming initiatives/interventions related to facilitating transitions to different life stages or roles.

Apprenticeship and occupational certification. The GNWT, following the recommendations of the industry-driven Apprenticeship, Trade and Occupations Certification Board, has designated under its legislation three occupations unique to the North: hunting guide, fishing guide, and furrier. The GNWT is working closely with the secondary diamond industry as well as other industries important to the North’s economic development, to identify occupations for designation. Designating occupations allows for the development of competency-based standards and formal recognition of skills outside the traditional trades.

Teacher education. A new Teacher Education Strategy has been developed in 1998 that will increase the number of Aboriginal teachers in the Northwest Territories. The strategy calls for the dedication of financial resources to deliver teacher education programs in various communities across the Northwest Territories. The strategy also identifies ways for diploma holders to complete their degrees through full-time and part-time studies. The goals of the strategy are to have a teaching force that is representative of the population in the Northwest Territories. Providing Aboriginal role models for children will encourage students to stay in school, and also ensure that local language and culture are a part of the education system and experience of children.

Systems assessment. The department will be working with the two public colleges to assess the effectiveness of the postsecondary education system in the Northwest Territories. The intent of the review is to identify exemplary practices for meeting the postsecondary education and training needs of northerners and to identify the effectiveness of support provided by the department for the two public colleges. Recommendations from the review will be developed for consideration by the two new governments that will be established on April 1, 1999.

Conclusion. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment is making progress in achieving the objectives outlined in its Strategic Plan, *People: Our Focus For The Future (1994)*. In particular, retention and

graduation rates are gradually improving; early childhood programs are developing across the NWT; and student needs are being addressed in a variety of creative ways. In the initiatives, there is a strong element of cultural-based and community-supported activities and resources.

Internet. Further information may be obtained at: ece.learnnet.nt.ca